

Survive Any Dive Catastrophe! p. 56

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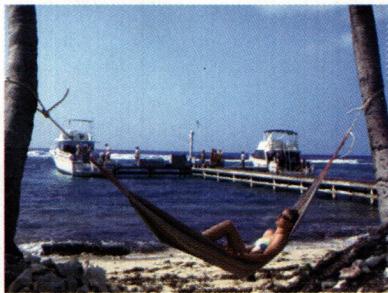
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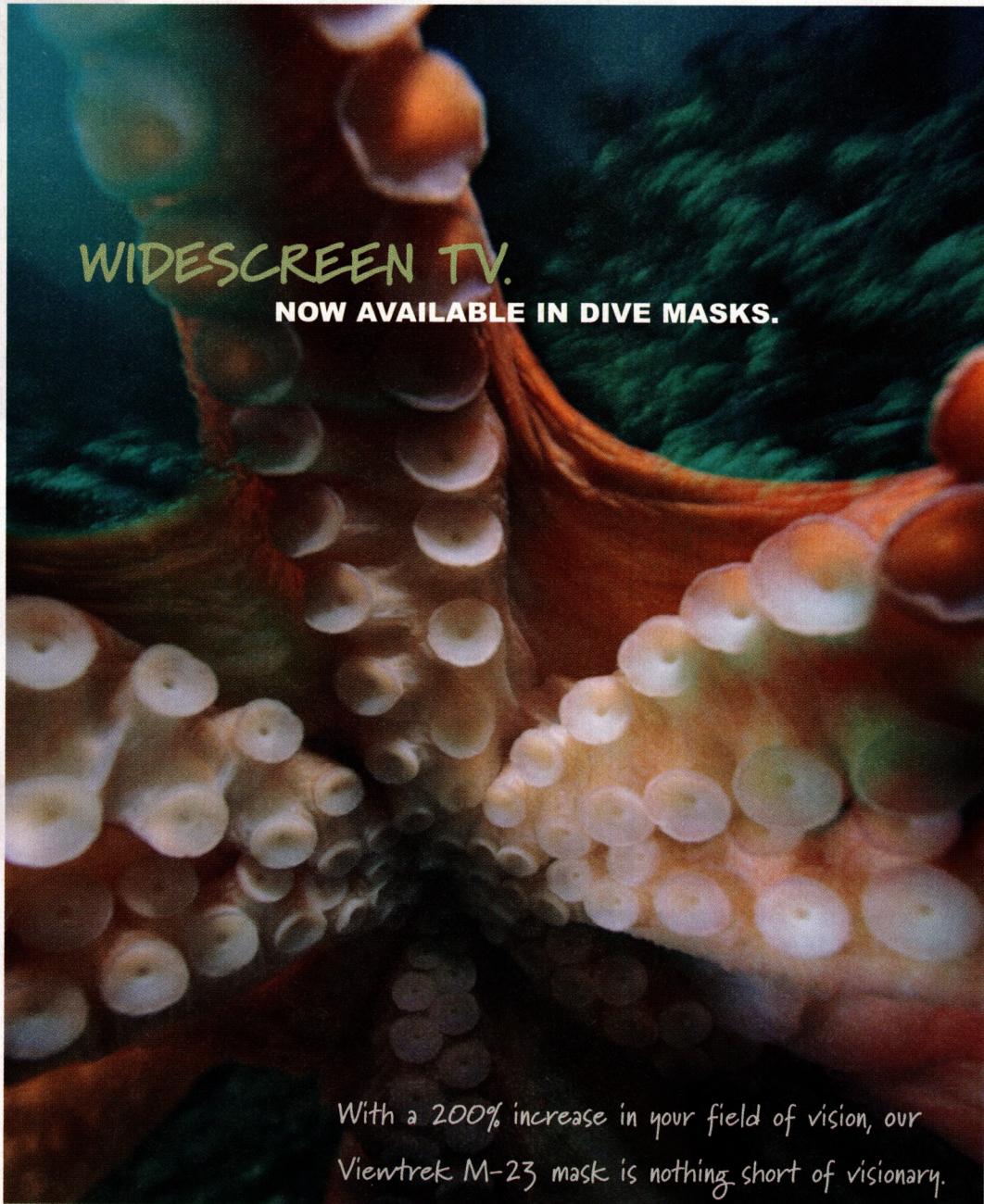
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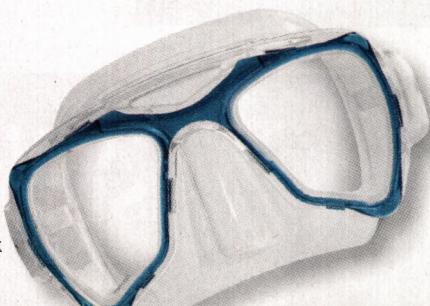
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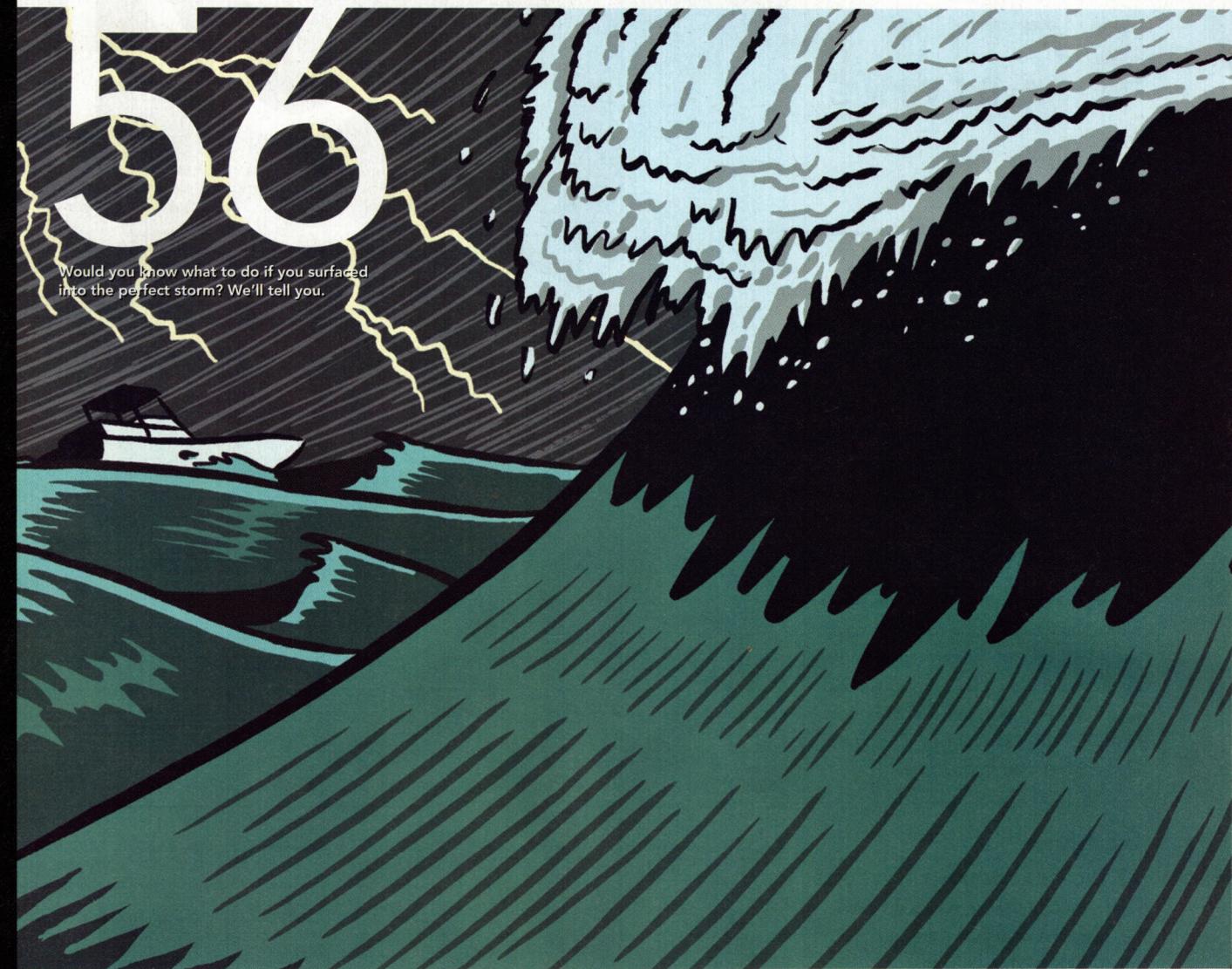
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56 Now What?! Overpowering currents, raging storms and marauding sharks? Your instructor never told you there'd be days like this, so we've compiled an exclusive survival guide to get you home safely when the dive goes from bad to worst. *By Gordon Bass*

DIVE LOG

62 U.S. Virgin Islands How much would you pay for a three-island paradise in the heart of the Caribbean? In 1917, Uncle Sam shelled out a cool \$25 million for the U.S. Virgin Islands. See why that investment has paid off handsomely. *By Steve Simonsen*

MATT MADDEN

Cover photo by Stephen Wong.

68 Time Machines OK, so maybe nobody really needs an analog dive watch to dive with. But who doesn't love the heft and rugged styling of a precision timepiece that's ready for anything above and below the water? Here are seven leading models that can go deep and look good doing it. *By John Brumm*

LESSONS FOR LIFE

72 Out of Breath Fighting a surface current is never a good idea, especially when you're 50 pounds overweight, wearing an overinflated dry suit, weighed down with four tanks and breathing from a hypoxic gas mix. *By Michael Ange*

RODALE'S
SCUBA
DIVING**THE GREAT DIVES**

17 OUR MONTHLY ROUNDUP of must-see dives takes you from a fish-filled reef crevice in the Atlantic to a World War II wreck in the Pacific with a layover to dive an eye-popping pinnacle in the Coral Sea. Best of all, there's no jet lag.

CURRENTS

22 SEE WHAT IT TAKES to build a bionic shark big enough to carry a diver and sturdy enough to withstand an attack by the real thing. **PLUS:** A Nazi warship rises from the murk, how exercise might beat DCS and a look at why deep reefs are healthier than shallow ones.

GEAR

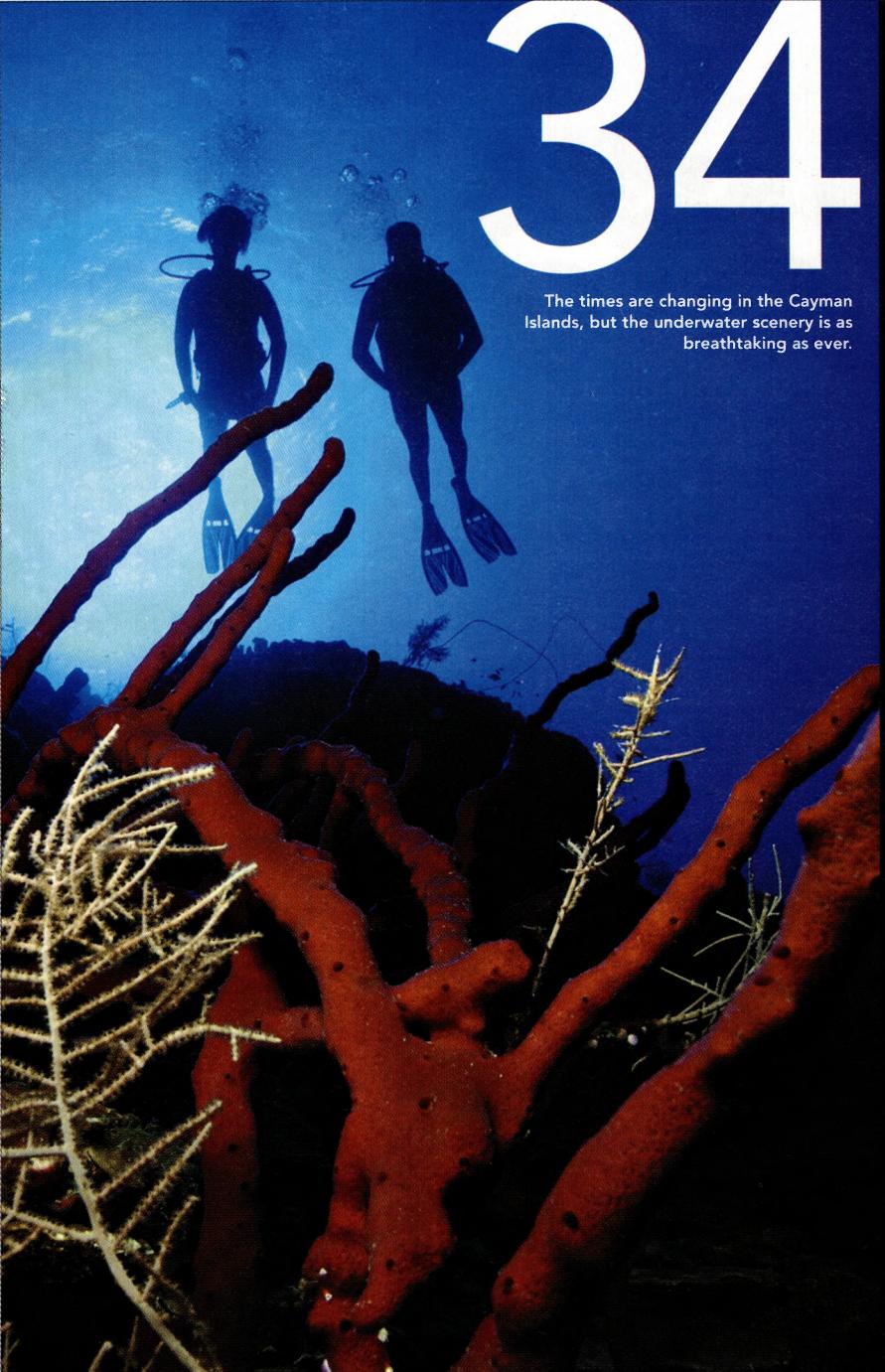
77 TROPICAL WEIGHT WETSUITS Keep your cool in these tropical skinsuits—thin neoprene wetsuits that are just right when it's just too hot for 3mm.

TRAINING

83 YOUR BODY We promise you'll smile more when you banish jaw fatigue and other diving related dental problems.

89 INSTRUCTION The command and control center for every dive is located directly above your neck. You'll dive better and safer when you take care of your noggin.

92 PHOTOGRAPHY Twelve top shooters show you what they use to get great images.



The times are changing in the Cayman Islands, but the underwater scenery is as breathtaking as ever.



34 CAYMAN TODAY A long-standing tradition of world-class diving meets a bright future in the here-and-now.

41 DRIVE & DIVE The oil and gas rigs off Texas are thrilling artificial reefs loaded with marine life.

51 TOP BIG ANIMAL DIVES Our readers rate the top 10 destinations for sharks, mantas, dolphins and more.

7 TALK 47 DIVE DEALS 95 IN DEPTH 104 LOOK

MESSAGE BOARD



THE NISSAN Xterra. Some SUVs are built to look pretty. This one is built to be used – often in ways most people would never imagine. Of course, considering some of the places the available 210-horsepower, SuperCharged V6, heavy-duty truck frame and hard-core suspension can take you, a little resourcefulness goes a long way. The Xterra: A million uses and counting.



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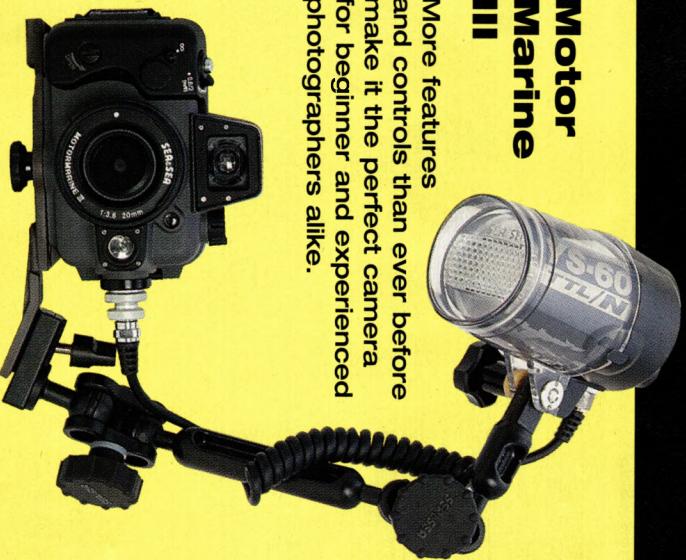
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(EDITOR'S NOTE)

The More Things Change ...

What the recent sale of this magazine means to you. **BY BUCK BUTLER**

I'M ALWAYS RELUCTANT to talk shop here because I know that when you pick up *Scuba Diving* you're far more interested in what's happening in, say, the Cayman Islands (see "Cayman Today," p. 34) than what's happening in our office building. Still, it's not every day that your magazine gets sold to a new publisher.

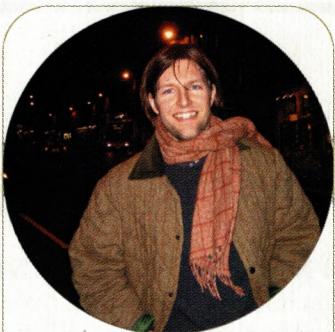
We had just started work on this issue when *Scuba Diving* was sold by Rodale, Inc., its publisher of 12 years, to Cincinnati-based F+W Publications. F+W is a rapidly growing publisher of more than 50 enthusiast magazines and hundreds of books on everything from graphic design to scrapbooking and horticulture. F+W bought *Scuba Diving* because it fits the company's growth strategy—to buy leading specialty publications with opportunities to grow.

Our staff, our editorial mission and our commitment to our readers remain unchanged. In this and future issues, you'll still find the best information about dive sites, techniques to make you a better diver (see "Now What?" p. 56) and the only objective dive equipment reviews available to consumers (see "Tropical Weight Wetsuits," p. 77). But thanks to F+W's capabilities, we're also exploring exciting new ventures, like books, clubs and conferences that will let us share our love of scuba with the most passionate divers we know—you, our readers.

Finally, the staff of *Scuba Diving* would like to thank Rodale Inc. for giving us a great start. And we'd like to thank our new colleagues at F+W for having the vision to see an even brighter future for our labor of love.



Then and now:
Our debut issue,
June 1992, and
our latest, June
2004.



(CONTRIBUTOR)

GORDON BASS

In "Now What?" p. 56, Gordon Bass offers advice on how to survive dive catastrophes. This summer, he will join his father, famed underwater archaeologist George F. Bass, to dive the site of a maritime catastrophe, the wreck of the *Atlantic* off Long Island, N.Y. The 320-foot sidewheel steamer sank in 1846, claiming the life of Gordon's great-great-great grandfather.

(ONLINE)

Live from Bonaire

Bonaire is the place to be this month for the 8th annual Bonaire Dive Festival. But if you can't be there in person, you can join in through our exclusive online coverage at www.scubadiving.com. Expanded to two weeks, activities at this year's festival include presentations by Philippe Cousteau, Jr., daily dives with local naturalists and demonstrations by underwater photo pros. Go to www.scubadiving.com/bonairedivefestival starting June 22 to see postings on festival events.



(LETTERS)

Rocket Man

IN YOUR TRAINING section on open-water ascents (April 2004), I noticed an apparent misprint. On page 98, the last sentence at the end of Step Five suggests that after practice, a person can tell what a 30-feet-per-second ascent rate feels like (rather than 30-feet-per-minute ascent rate). Here's hoping that none of us ever experience a 30-foot-per-second ascent unless it's in a space shuttle.

—Dale Folsom, Marrero, La.



Scubapro Responds

AS DULY NOTED IN THE LETTERS SECTION of your March 2004 issue, the editor cannot speak for Scubapro/Uwatec. Since I do speak for that business, I am pleased to respond to the question, "Where's Scubapro?"

The answer is simple. We believe divers are best served by independent product testing based on sound scientific criteria and data, versus subjective product comparisons that produce inconsistent results. We take great pride in the reputation, quality and integrity of our business, and more people are purchasing Scubapro/Uwatec diving products than ever before. These divers must be getting the facts about Scubapro/Uwatec from respected industry professionals, such as instructors and dive store owners who recommend our products based on quality and performance they have trusted for more than 40 years. We work hard to earn their trust by investing in scientific research and development efforts to ensure continuously better Scubapro/Uwatec diving and snorkeling products. —Joseph B. Stella, Group Vice President, Global Diving, Scubapro/Uwatec

(HOW TO REACH US)

We want to know what's on your mind. Here are three easy ways to tell us:

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MAIL: Editor, Rodale's Scuba Diving, 6600 Abercorn St., Suite 208, Savannah, GA 31405

The question, as asked by your customers, still stands, Joe. ScubaLab is the only independent organization conducting objective, scientific tests of dive gear for the consumer. Prior to ScubaLab, divers were expected to buy gear in the manner you describe—based solely on the subjective opinions of others. Now they have a source of unbiased information that empowers them to make informed buying decisions.

(LIST)

TOP 10 LIES VETERAN DIVERS TELL NEWBIES

#10

Sure! The newest diver always carries his buddy's tank.

#9: No, really, it's warmer on the bottom.

#8

No, just spit in it and leave it there.

#7

That rip on my BC? Shark attack.

#6: No, no, no—that fin goes on your other foot!

#5

You honestly didn't know you can fill your tanks with the hose at the gas station?

#4

Rule No. 1: More weight equals more bottom time.

#3

When you surface, splash around and yell for the boat, so they come get you first.

#2

That bottom time is a relative figure, since most of the time you don't touch bottom.

#1: When I was your age, there was no such thing as a boat dive! We had to do 15-mile-long surface swims in heavy surge! And when we got there, we only had enough air to stay down at 30 feet for 10 minutes, because our tanks were made out of wood, and they leaked like the dickens!

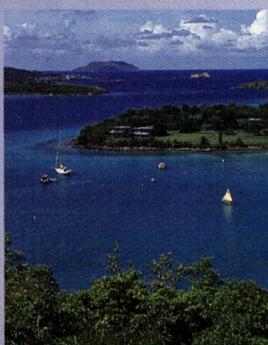
(From the users of www.scubadiving.com. For more Top 10 lists, go to www.scubadiving.com and click on "Community.")

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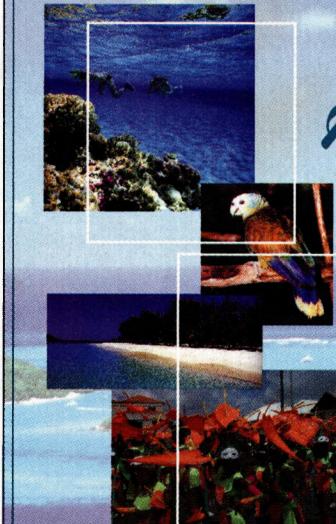
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THE GREAT
Dives

French grunts hug a coral head at Wedge Rock off South Cat Cay, about 12 miles south of Bimini.

(BIMINI, BAHAMAS)

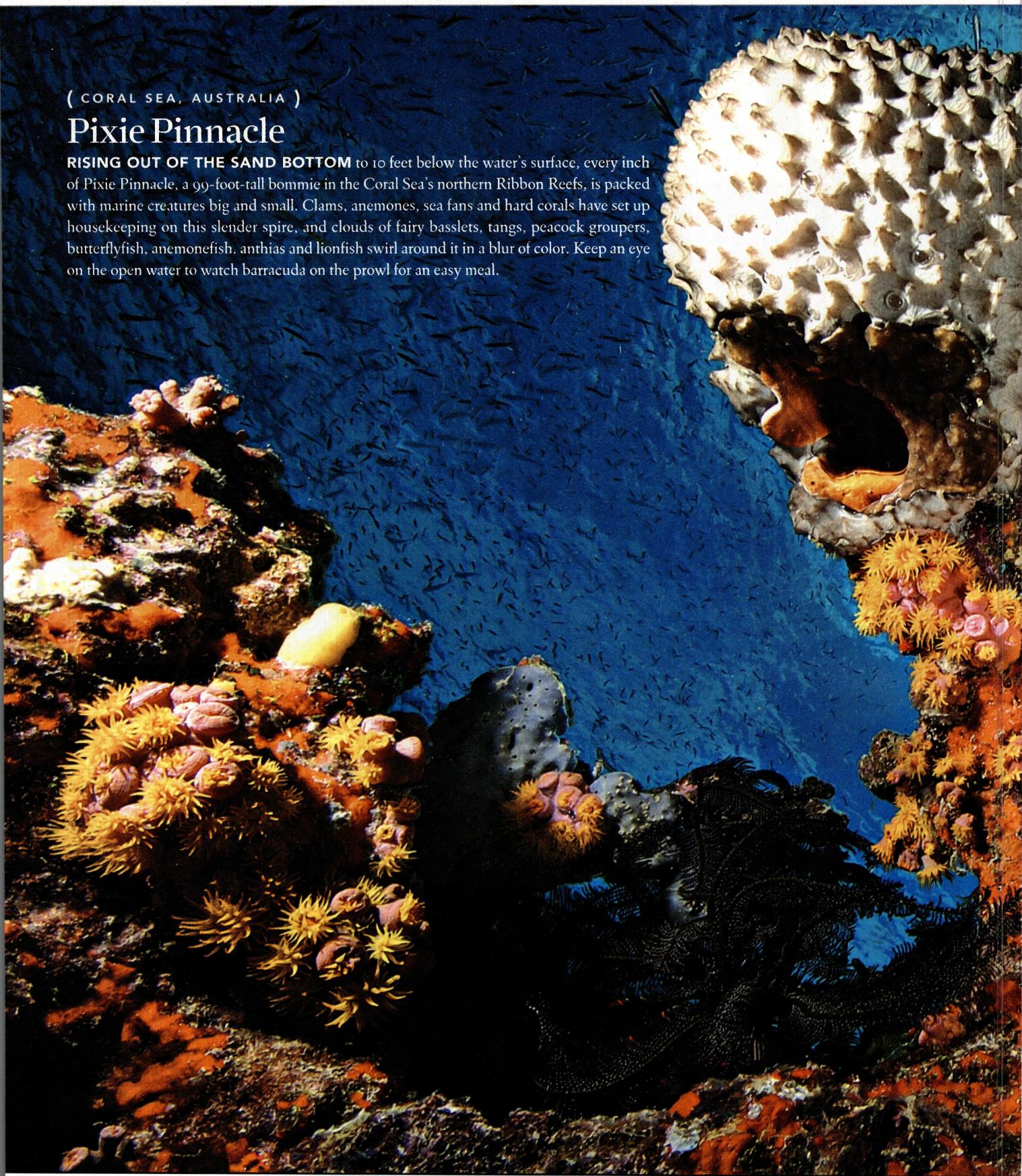
Wedge Rock

AT THE END OF their weeklong Bimini itineraries, live-aboard operators often anchor at tranquil South Cat Cay, near the southern end of the 28-mile-long Bimini chain. And it's easy to see why: Wedge Rock, just off South Cat Cay's southern tip, is a shallow site offering mild conditions and see-forever visibility. A chunky formation that just breaks the surface of the water, Wedge Rock is perfect for nitrogen-loaded live-aboard divers who often opt for paddling around in snorkel gear. The easygoing conditions and plenty of sheltering coral heads make the site an ideal nursery for reef fish, including red-lipped blennies, yellowtail snappers and French grunts.

(CORAL SEA, AUSTRALIA)

Pixie Pinnacle

RISING OUT OF THE SAND BOTTOM to 10 feet below the water's surface, every inch of Pixie Pinnacle, a 99-foot-tall bommie in the Coral Sea's northern Ribbon Reefs, is packed with marine creatures big and small. Clams, anemones, sea fans and hard corals have set up housekeeping on this slender spire, and clouds of fairy basslets, tangs, peacock groupers, butterflyfish, anemonefish, anthias and lionfish swirl around it in a blur of color. Keep an eye on the open water to watch barracuda on the prowl for an easy meal.





Pixie Pinnacle, on the Coral Sea's Ribbon Reefs, can be circled in a few minutes. You'll use lots more bottom time, however, to see everything it offers.



(OAHU, HAWAII)

YO-257

THE 147-FOOT-LONG YO-257 stands tall against an intense blue backdrop 100 feet under water off Oahu's Waikiki Beach. Large access holes make this 1940s Navy yard oil tanker easy to penetrate, and mooring buoys connected to a descent line make the main deck easy to locate at 85 feet. Huge schools of brilliantly colored reef fish wrap around the wreck. Eagle rays and the occasional manta make appearances, and whitetip reef sharks and green sea turtles often rest on the reef around the wreck. Fifty yards from YO-257 is the 150-foot-long *San Pedro*, a freighter scuttled in 1996. **SD**

GET THERE > For more information on these Great Dives, turn to *In Depth*, page 95, section 1.

In 1989, Atlantis Submarines scuttled the YO-257 as an attraction for submarine passengers.



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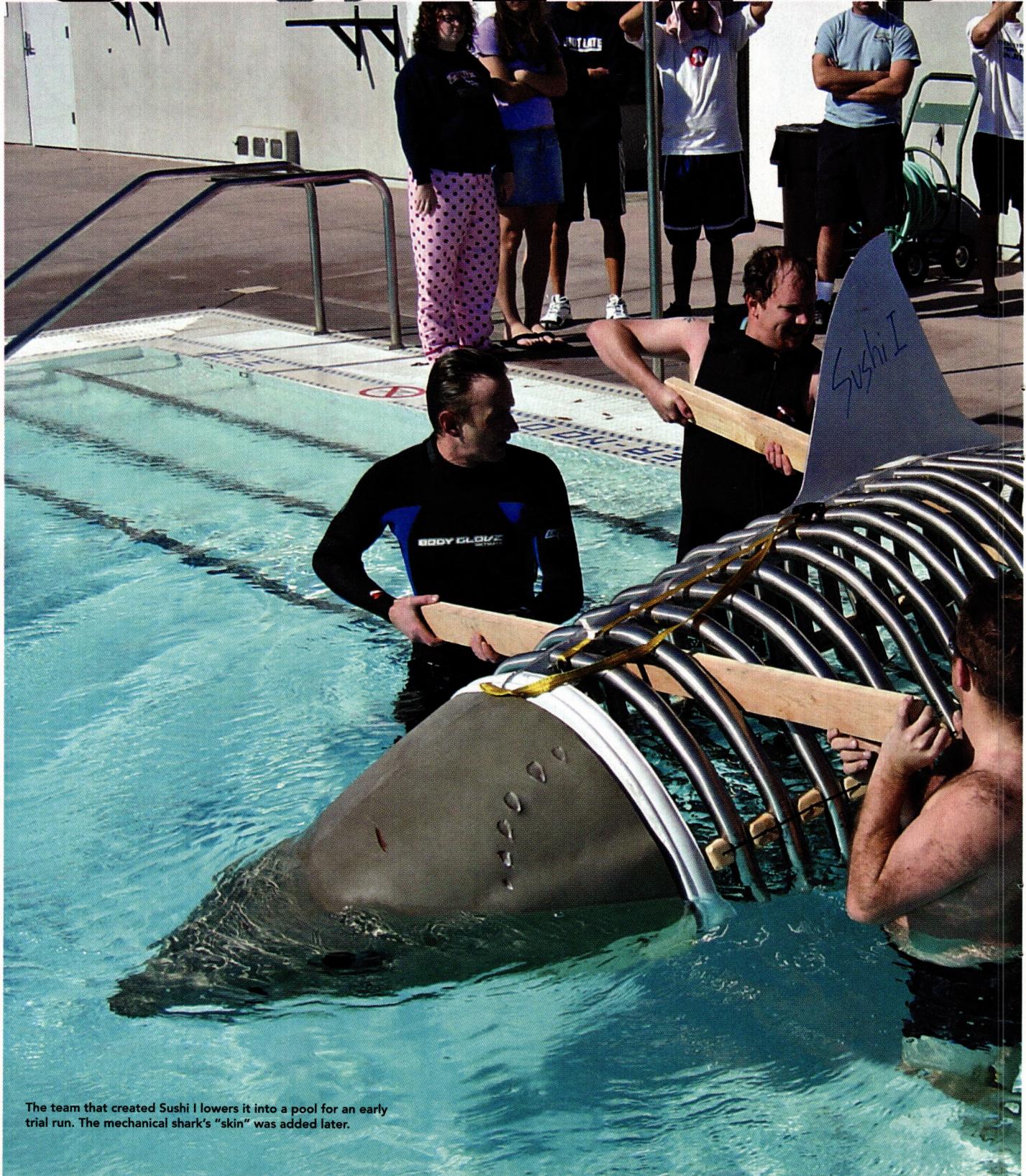
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Current



The team that created Sushi I lowers it into a pool for an early trial run. The mechanical shark's "skin" was added later.



notes



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF EDDIE PAUL

(INVENTION)

Trojan Shark

Can a mechanical great white shark help us learn about the ocean's fiercest apex predator?

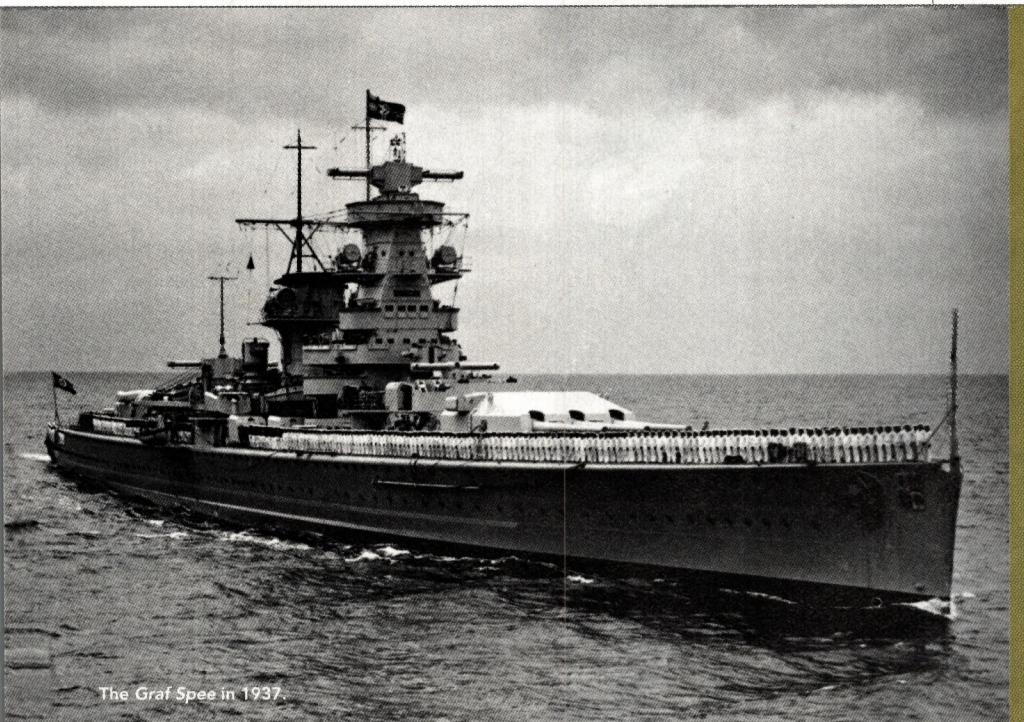
Imagine a 3,000-pound Volkswagen Beetle with blade-like teeth on its front grille hurtling toward you at 25 miles per hour. Now imagine what it would take to protect yourself from the impact.

This is (more or less) what it's like to be rammed by a great white shark. And this is the challenge facing documentary filmmaker Fabien Cousteau (grandson of Jacques-Yves, son of Jean-Michel), who plans to be the human controller inside a mechanical great white so that he can study the real thing.

"It's a rough ride," says designer Eddie Paul. "Even getting hit by the tail of a great white can knock you across a shark cage." So when Cousteau asked Paul to come up with a lifelike shark for him, Paul knew it would be taking a serious beating.

Nicknamed Sushi I, Paul's creation weighs 1,000 pounds and is 14 feet long, large enough to fit Cousteau, his video and audio monitor, a rebreather unit and the scuba tank used for propulsion. Sushi's skin is made from Fastflex, a buoyant urethane elastomer that has been tinted dark gray on top and white on the belly; its ribs are made from super-strong, flexible stainless steel tubing. "The ribbing is built like a roll cage on a stunt car. Sushi will withstand getting hit by great whites," Paul says. "But I'm not sure about Fabien," he adds, jokingly.

A "remoracam" mounted on Sushi's back will allow Cousteau to catch all the action when the bionic shark is launched off Mexico's Guadalupe Island, a hotbed of great white shark encounters. "I've had this dream since I was eight," Cousteau says. "I wanted to become a Trojan horse and study sharks in their own habitat."

The *Graf Spee* in 1937.

(SALVAGE)

The *Graf Spee*'s Second Coming

A Nazi warship rears its head—again.

As a symbol of Nazi military power, the *Graf Spee* was top in its class. In the late 1930s, this state-of-the-art warship—one of the first to use radar—prowl the Indian Ocean and the South Atlantic, intimidating Allied ships and ultimately sinking nine of them.

But in 1939, in one of World War II's most important naval confrontations, the ship was outnumbered by British cruisers off of Montevideo, Uruguay. Facing certain defeat, the German captain scuttled the ship and shot himself shortly after. Right there, in 25 feet of mud-dark water, the *Graf Spee*'s infamous career ended.

Well, sort of.

Sixty-five years later the *Graf Spee* has come raging back, thanks to the efforts of project mastermind Alfredo Etchegaray, who, along with a team of professional divers and marine archaeologists, will be raising the 12,000-ton ship, piece by piece, over the next three years.

They've recently brought up the 27-ton communications tower; next up will be six megaton cannons. The challenges the divers face include whiplash currents and near-zero visibility. As this spot is located off one of South America's main estuaries, it is dense with sediment: "Visibility is often less than 18 inches," says Etchegaray.

So why do it? A good question, when you consider that the *Graf Spee* lies in treacherous shoals known as the English Banks, surrounded by a virtual cemetery of gold-laden Spanish galleons; Etchegaray estimates there are as many as 1,500 wrecks here. So why raise a Nazi ship with no treasure, when there's a wealth of others to choose from?

"The ship has no value inside. But that's not the issue," explains Etchegaray, who hopes the ship will eventually become the centerpiece of a major Montevideo museum. "There's a history here that you can't put a value on. And the *Graf Spee* is a story that we are committed to telling."

10,000

(STAT)

Amount in U.S. dollars of the settlement obtained by NOAA from two lobstermen who dumped everything from car hoods to old bathtubs in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. To date, NOAA has removed 65 tons of coral-crushing trash from sites identified on the men's GPS unit.

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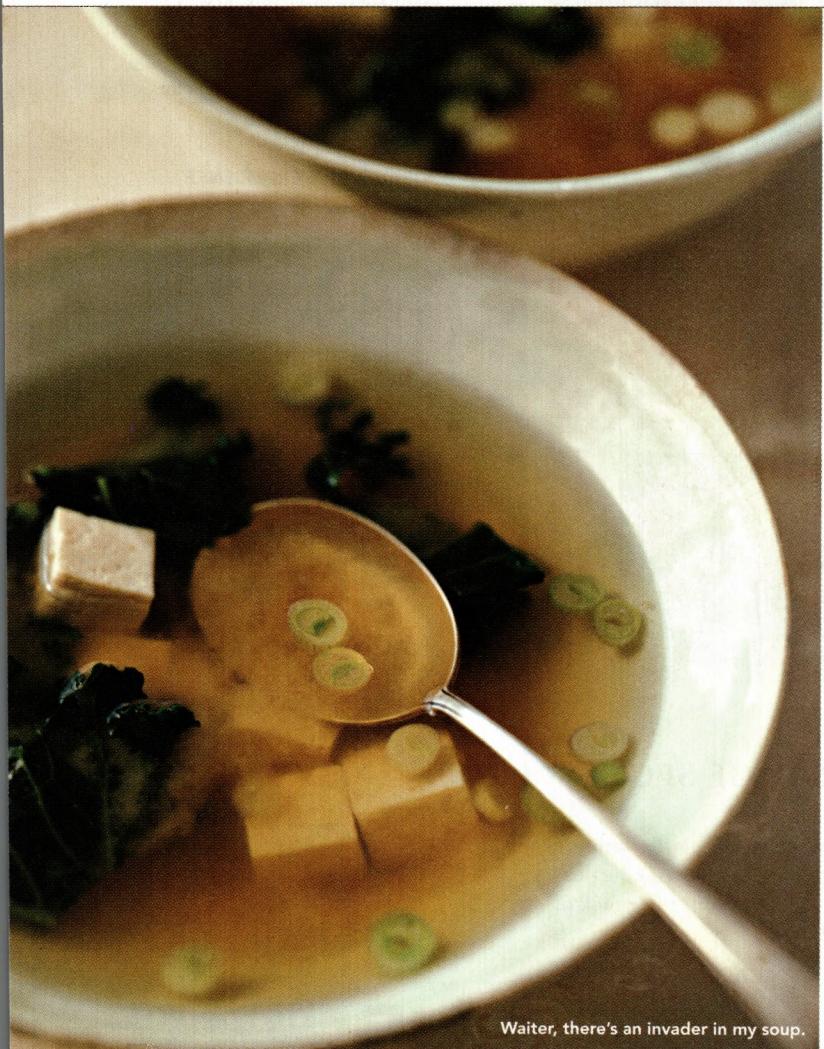
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Trinidad & Tobago

(STUDY)

Pacific sea turtle populations have declined 80 to 95 percent in the last two decades. Many of the causes—pollution, climate changes and oil spills—are widely known. Now, a new study from Duke University gives the first worldwide measure of the devastating effect of pelagic longline fishing on imperiled turtle species. Using data from 13 countries' observer programs, Duke researchers found that some 200,000 loggerhead turtles and 50,000 leatherbacks are hooked or entangled in longlines annually. And since the 1.4 billion longline hooks thrown into oceans each year disproportionately attract turtles that are almost sexually mature, the impact is especially profound, says Rebecca Lewison, lead author of the study. One possible solution is to change the widely used "J" shaped hooks to "O" shaped ones with barbs that turtles are less likely to bite. For this to happen, observes Lewison, "the U.S. State Department needs to lead an international effort to develop and implement effective gear fixes." —SHEILA FEENEY



Waiter, there's an invader in my soup.

(CLEAN UP)

Miso Mess

Japanese seaweed invades Monterey.

Look carefully at your miso soup next time you're in a Japanese restaurant. Floating in between the tofu cubes will be a few pieces of slimy green seaweed. This delicacy, called wakame, aka *Undaria pinnatifida*, also happens to be one of the most invasive species known to man.

Undaria is native to Japanese waters, where it's cultivated for food products. In 2000 it was detected off of Los Angeles; a year later it had taken hold as far north as Monterey. No one knows exactly how it got there, but a good guess is that it was in the ballast water of California-bound Japanese vessels.

Now, say scientists at Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, the seaweed is clinging to every hard surface in the harbor: docks, ropes, boats and debris on the seafloor. "It's a fast-growing, non-native species with the potential to change an ecosystem," warns Steve Lonhart, a scientist at the sanctuary.

With the help of volunteer divers, the sanctuary has removed more than 1,000 pounds of the stuff; most of it's getting tossed into dumpsters, but Lonhart is exploring possible uses for the seaweed, such as fertilizer and food for abalone. "Our priority now is to control its spread," he adds, "so we don't end up with a disaster on our hands."

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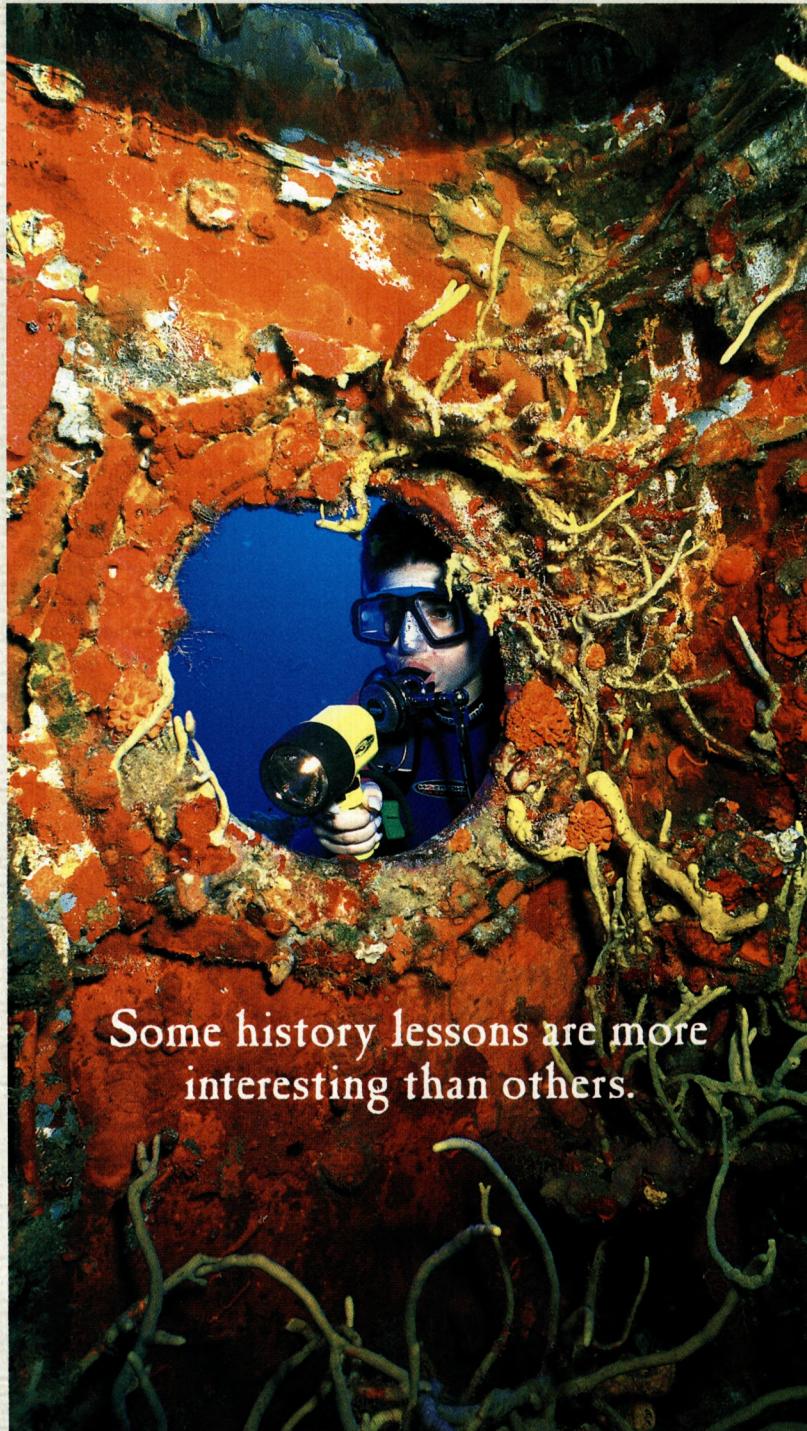


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(FITNESS)

Get Buff, Not Bent

Can exercise prevent the bends?

When an international team of researchers set out to prove that divers in better physical condition could eliminate oxygen bubbles in the bloodstream faster than out-of-shape divers, they stumbled on a surprising finding: One single bout of strenuous aerobic exercise 24 hours before a dive minimized bubble formation. Test subjects, who ran on a treadmill at 85 to 90 percent of their maximum heart rate one day prior to diving, effectively decreased bubble formation.

"We know that less effort will not work," states author Alf Brubakk, Ph.D., professor of environmental physiology at the University of Science and Technology in Trondheim, Norway. "We also know that exercise at any other time does not work either. However," he cautions, "at this stage we still only have limited data."

In fact—as counterintuitive as it seems—if you can't exercise exactly 24 hours in advance, it may be wise to skip your workout entirely. As Brubakk explains, "Heavy exercise immediately before a dive seems to promote bubble formation." —GINA MARSHALL

(REEF REPORT)

GOOD NEWS RUNS DEEP

Scientists find healthy coral below 115 feet.

Coral reefs around the world are being decimated by pollution, global warming and El Niños, among other culprits, and the studies documenting their decline are as numerous as they are dire. But researchers at Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute and the University of Puerto Rico may have found a glimmer of hope by looking deeper.

"The majority of the research on coral reefs has been done by divers limited to about 115 feet," says Woods Hole scientist Hanumant Singh. "By using an autonomous underwater vehicle—an unmanned, untethered robot—we were able to look at depths from 115 to 245 feet."

Said vehicle, SeaBED, swoops and hovers like an undersea helicopter, closing in on the sides of drop-offs to take high-res digital images. Since SeaBED can stay under water for up to five hours at a shot, Singh and team worked exclusively at night—during the day, the sunlight changes that occur over so many hours would have made camera exposure problematic.

During the course of the two-year project, working 10 miles off the coast of the U.S. Virgin Islands, SeaBED brought back some 7,000 images of reefs so healthy that the scientists were amazed. "You typically find 30 to 40 percent coral coverage in a shallow-water reef," says Singh. "On these reefs we were finding 70 percent."

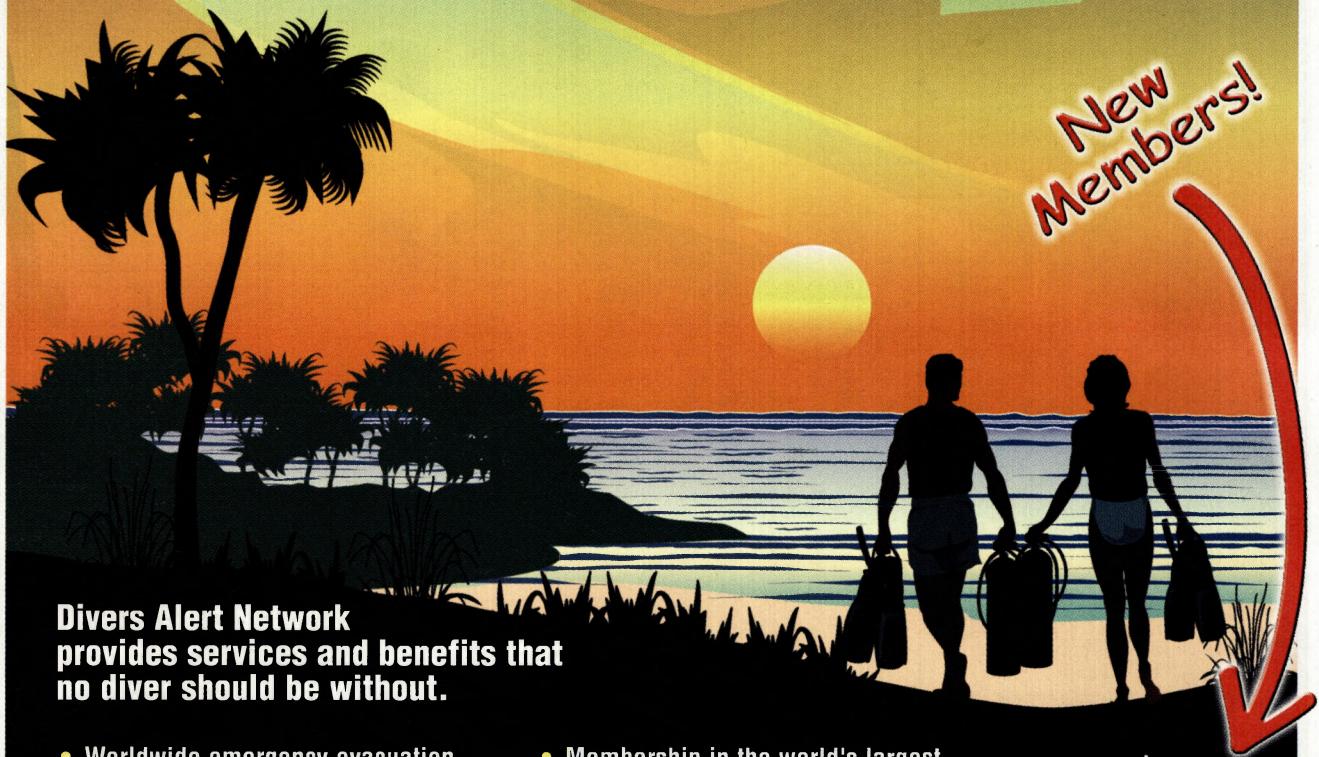
Singh points out that these findings in no way negate earlier studies on shallow-water reefs, which are clearly in trouble. "But there could be hope here," says Singh. "If you look at the factors degrading shallow-water reefs, they should be in even worse shape than they are. The reason they aren't might be the recruitment of coral polyps from intermediate waters to the shallow reefs. And that could mean that if factors taking a toll on shallow reefs get cut, they could regenerate more quickly than we might expect." —JERRY SHINE



Woods Hole's imaging vehicle SeaBED.

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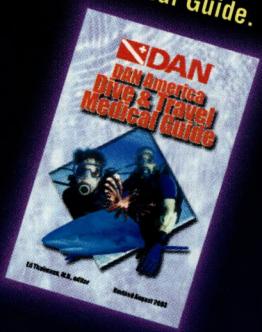
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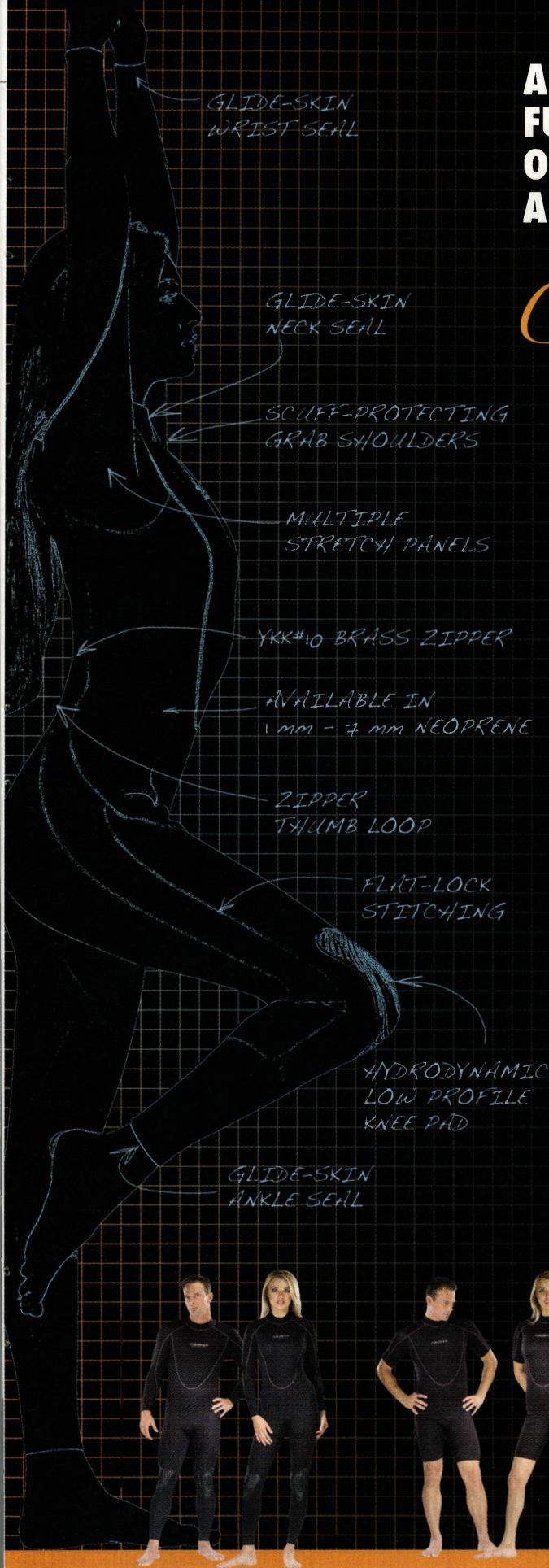


(FISH ID)

What Is This?

You'll find this fish, recognizable by a dorsal fin that sits high on its head, slithering around Asia and the western Pacific. Typically mottled-brown in color, it's mainly a reef-dweller, though it also likes muddy or hard-bottomed habitats. Like its airborne namesake, this fish can cause a lot of grief, thanks to its extremely venomous spines. It primarily uses them only in self-defense, but if you do happen to get stung by one, seek help fast. In some cases this creature's sting is as harmless as a bug bite, but be advised it can also be lethal.

the ANSWERWISPY WASPFISH, *Paracentropogon longispinis*



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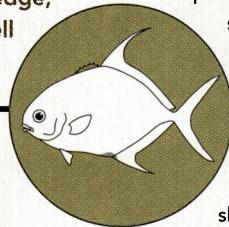


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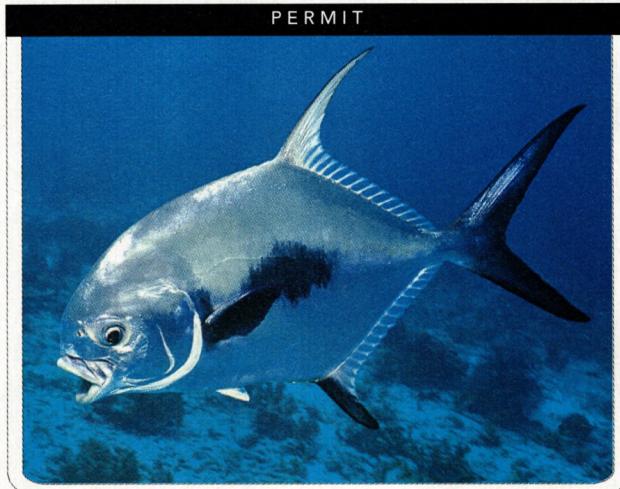
There are two kinds of open-ocean jacks that come inshore to feed. Armed with a little knowledge, you'll be able to tell them apart.



The majority of the ocean's large silvery fishes live in the open seas, where reflective bodies help conceal their presence from predators and prey. But several glittery-scaled members of the jack family, includ-

ing the permit, *Trachinotus falcatus*, and palometa, *T. goodei*, make regular forays inshore to pick up quick meals over shallow sands.

Although not commonly encountered by reef divers, the two stylish disc-shaped jacks, trailing long, elegant fins, make quite an impression when sighted. Size, subtle body markings and habitat help to distinguish between the two



closely related species.

Permit are by far the larger of the two jacks. Some individuals reach over three feet in length and weigh nearly 60

pounds. They typically have dark fin accents and occasionally display a dusky blotch at midbody. Permit have large, blubbery lips and strong jaws,

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Rodale's Scuba Diving magazine, November, 2003



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indicative of their penchant for gastropods such as small queen conch, urchins and crabs—hard-shelled delicacies that lone hunters mine from rich inshore sand flats throughout the day. At times, loose groups casually swim through open water.

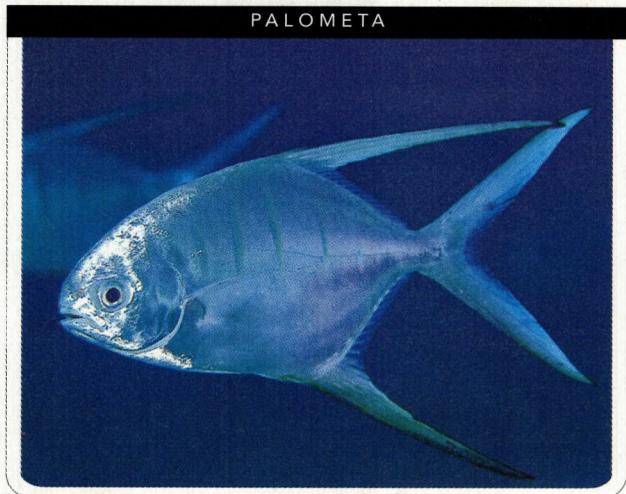
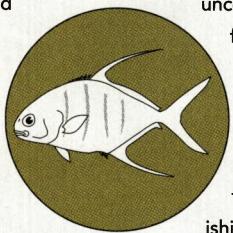
Quite wary, permit tend to shy away when approached. However, if you chance upon one rooting intently in the sand, you can often swim right up to it.

In contrast, palometa are much smaller and less robust, seldom reaching more than a foot in length. They inhabit shallow surge zones of clear-water

beaches where schools untiringly forage for minnow-like fishes and small, sand-burrowing animals. Routinely, a dozen or more of the wispy little jacks swirl invisibly about unsuspecting bathers in the hopes of gobbling up invertebrates

uncovered by shuffling feet. Lively schools often bestow a thrill on returning beach divers by abruptly circling them—and then vanishing into the surge as suddenly as they appeared.

As with many members of the jack family, the spawning behavior of these two species has never been documented.



PALOMETA

The occurrence of schools of juveniles in the surf during the warmest months indicates that reproduction takes place in early summer. The fact that it

has never been observed suggests that it probably happens in the open sea at night.

PAUL HUMANN AND NED DELOACH

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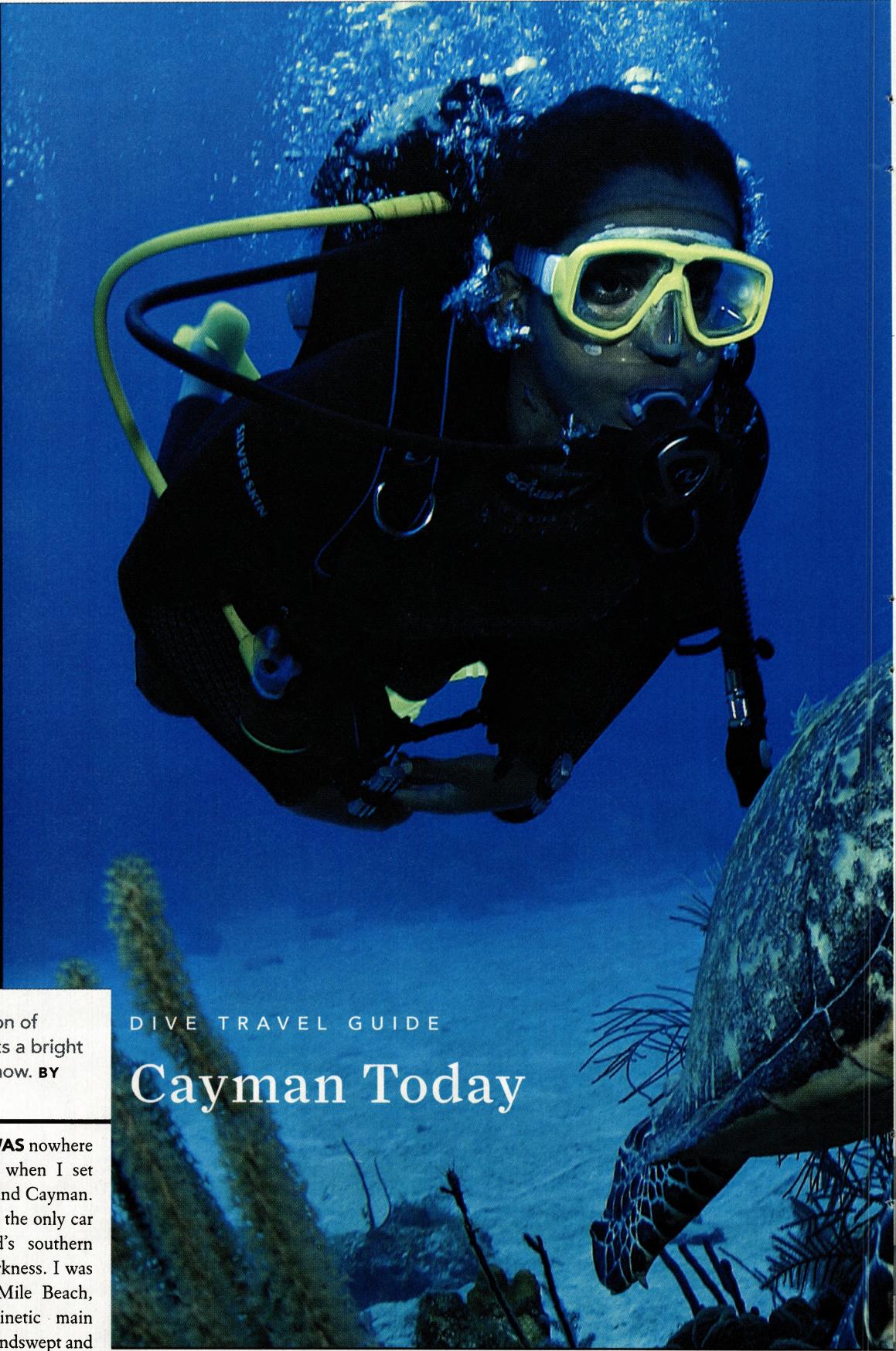
Travel

A long-standing tradition of world-class diving meets a bright future in the here-and-now. **BY DEBORAH KIRK**

DAWN WAS nowhere in sight when I set out for the East End of Grand Cayman. Not surprisingly, mine was the only car cruising along the island's southern coastal road in the total darkness. I was on my way from Seven Mile Beach, Grand Cayman's hyperkinetic main drag, to go diving off the windswept and

DIVE TRAVEL GUIDE

Cayman Today



An enormous native turtle population led Christopher Columbus to name these islands "Las Tortugas" in 1503. Today, the name and the islands themselves have changed, but the ancient residents can still be found here.



MORE CAYMANS

Go to ScubaDiving.com and select Cayman Islands from the **TripFinder** menu to get advice on dive operators, hotels and restaurants from the divers who've been there. We have trip reports and photo galleries from veterans and newbies alike.

relatively unpopulated East End. I'd been told to give myself an hour, but I wanted to take my time, to see what this side of the island looked like as the sun came up.

As the landscape unfolded—past the slow-going village of Bodden Town, past blowholes dramatically chiseled out of the rugged ironshore, past pristine coastal waters filled with lush reefs and untold shipwrecks—it occurred to me that this end of Grand Cayman remains the old-school Caribbean, a place to which change, thankfully, still comes at a crawl.

I pulled up at Ocean Frontiers, one of just three dive shops on the East End, and boarded a boat along with a small group of divers. Divemaster Dan Schaar, a 27-year-old South Dakota native with a fearsome knowledge of the marine ecosystem, began our briefing with a rundown on East End diving: "Here, on the windward side of Grand Cayman, you'll find very dramatic topography. Because of the exposure, we've got a completely different reef structure than

anywhere else. It's why there have been so many wrecks here. It's also why you won't see many other divers. With seas typically between three and eight feet," he added, "the conditions rule out a lot of our dive sites on any given day."

Fortunately, this late February day was calm and crystalline, and we'd be able to do a site that had been at the top of my list: Snapper Hole, which lies just off the eastern point and is perhaps the most wind-battered spot on the island. Snapper Hole is a shallow dive, no more than 60 feet, but it's a standout. The chop has etched an extensive network of caves, crevices and tunnels into the reef, which shelters masses of fish. Huge knots of tarpon glinted in the filtered sunlight, barracudas maledgered at my ankles, a green moray lay coiled beneath an overhang. There's a diver's-fantasyland quality to this site, almost as if it had been stage-managed for maximum impact. Besides the lost-in-the-funhouse effect of the fish-filled tunnels, there's an abundance of brilliant coral—

elkhorn, staghorn, brain, finger. There's even a well-embedded anchor, from a century-old Spanish shipwreck, at the top of the reef.

Afterwards, I asked Steve Broadbelt, one of Ocean Frontiers' owners and a committed environmentalist, about the work he's doing to protect the East End's reef system. It's in superb health now, since it doesn't get much traffic and it lies a good distance from the cruise ships that call at George Town's harbor.

"We're trying to be proactive, not reactive," said Steve, who's been studying how many divers visit each site for the last three years. He sends the data he collects to Cayman's Department of the Environment, which has been researching diver impact on the island. (At the most, one or two sites on the East End see 1,000 dives a year, while more than 50 percent of the West Side sites get upward of 5,000 a year; some are thought to get closer to 15,000.) He's also involved in an ongoing study of the Caribbean reef shark's life cycle, to understand how—and where—to protect its habitat. When I asked

CARLOS VILLOCH



The intricately sculpted reef at Snapper Hole shelters masses of fish.

how he juggles so many projects, he answered with a laugh: "Well, maybe it's because things here are so quiet that I need to find ways to keep busy."

By nightfall, I was back on Seven Mile Beach's pulsating central artery, West Bay Road (where the hotels, restaurants and malls are clustered), and the calm of the East End was receding like a fuzzy memory. This strip, which runs straight into George Town (government buildings, banks, duty-free shops and more restaurants), is the white-hot epicenter of all island activity.

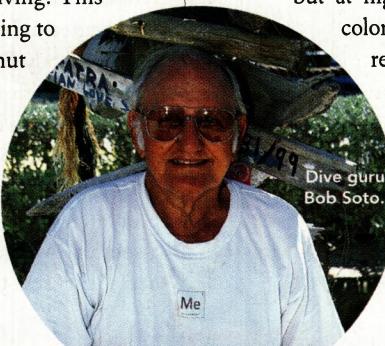
By day, the action is all in the water. The 40-odd dive shops here offer frequent trips to the North Wall, a must for its mind-numbing vertical drop-off. Or, if the seas are up, they'll go to West Bay Wall instead, a slightly more protected spot but no less thrilling. The cruise ship passengers deposited in George Town usually hop in the water, too: Some dive, others go on snorkeling tours to Stingray City, a surefire photo-op where hundreds of Southern stingrays feed in the shallows inside the north shore's barrier reef.

In the evening, the pace picks up on Seven Mile Beach. Rush-hour traffic fills West Bay Road, while brave late-day joggers run on its shoulders. As night wears on, crowds flock to the island's hot spots: Aqua Beach, the Lone Star and the bar of the moment, Coconut Joe's, a jungle-themed hangout whose Jagermeister-soaked happy hours are, for many, the only way to end the day.

Of course, besides eating, drinking and dancing, the after-dark hours hold another appealing option: more diving. This was something I wasn't going to miss, the pull of Coconut Joe's notwithstanding.

Just after sunset on a cloudless Friday, I boarded a dive boat bound for Turtle Farm Reef, a mini-wall that bottoms out at 60 feet.

STEPHEN FRINK (TOP); CARLOS VILLOCH (TOP RIGHT)



BEST BETS

GRAND CAYMAN

Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Park > Stop off at this lush mid-island sanctuary before or after diving the East End, and check out the riot of iguanas, parrots, orchids and bromeliads. www.botanic-park.ky

Rum Point > At laid-back Rum Point, on the tip of Grand Cayman's North Sound, you'll find a restaurant, bar and plenty of hammocks slung about the gorgeous beach. Take the Rum Pointer Ferry from the Hyatt dock, 45 minutes each way. 345-949-9098.

Cayman Turtle Farm > At this popular, family-friendly attraction, visitors can observe (and in some cases pet) turtles of every shape, size and color imaginable. www.turtle.ky.

Atlantis Submarine > This George Town-based outfit offers a range of sub excursions, including a trip in a research sub that takes passengers down to 1,000 feet. www.atlantisadventures.com.

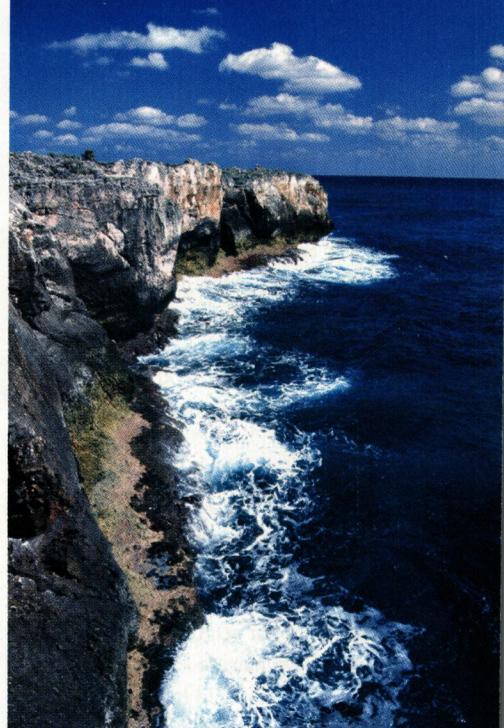
SISTER ISLANDS

National Trust Visitors' Center, Little Cayman > Little Cayman's serene Booby Pond, a nesting ground for hundreds of red-footed boobies, is best viewed from the deck of the National Trust building, which offers telescopes and a ton of information on local flora and fauna. www.nationaltrust.org.ky.

The Bluff, Cayman Brac > Hike along—or rock climb—the craggy cliffs at the bluff's scenic easternmost point, or wander into the many cool, dark caves sculpted into its sides. www.naturecayman.ky.

The tarpon, moray eels, coral plumes and anemones were probably no different from those I'd seen elsewhere around the island, but at night there was a surreal, color-saturated energy on the reef. Turtle Farm Reef is a particularly vibrant night dive, since the nearby Cayman Turtle Farm discharges organic matter into the water, attracting loads of fish and reef-dwellers.

Cayman Brac's eastern bluff.



The Founding Father

The longer I was on Grand Cayman, the more I felt like I was on two different islands. Or maybe it was more like two versions of the same place, one in the high-gear present, the other its time-delayed earlier self. So I decided to find Bob Soto, the grand master of Caribbean diving, for a reality check. As the guy who opened the first dive shop here, in 1957, he surely would have a perspective on the dual personality of this island.

Bob, 78, was relaxing in his North Bay house when we met. He spoke about the origins of diving here: how he used to use old fire extinguishers for tanks. How it would take 90 minutes to fill each one, using old Cornelius compressors salvaged from World War II bombers. How he'd take apart old batteries to make lead weights. How in '57 the population here was 8,000, a fifth of what it is today, and it cost \$7.50 for a two-tank dive. "I knew we were in a wonderful spot," he remembered, "and I knew it would grow. But I never knew it would take off like this. People used to look down at us divers, like we were a macho motorcycle gang. But now I'm happy to see that today it's being enjoyed by everyone, whole families."

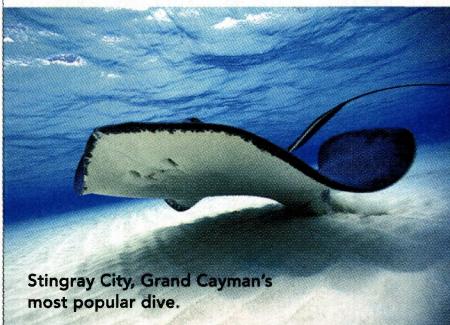
On the subject of cruise ships, he was less sanguine. "We have too many coming into George Town," he said (there are often five to seven ships a day, with up to 3,500 people per ship). But he sees the trade-off with clear eyes: On the one hand, the ships bring needed business, on the other, they've brought rapid change—both socially and environmentally—to Grand Cayman. "And now the cruise ship people are screaming for more things to do here," he added. "So they're planning a multimillion-dollar water theme park, with rides and the whole nine yards, by the Turtle Farm."

Looking Forward

As I would learn, this park—slated to open by the end of 2005—is one of three new projects that will serve two purposes: 1) to

attract more people to the islands, and 2) to dilute the traffic at busy sites by spreading people around to new ones.

A second such effort, spearheaded by Divetech's Nancy Easterbrook, is Shipwreck City: a plan to sink five ships around Grand Cayman and Little Cayman over the next five years. Working with the Cayman Islands Tourism Authority, Easterbrook estimates the cost of sinking the ships is between \$2.5 and \$5 million; the government has promised to fund a portion of it. The Department of the Environment wor-



Stingray City, Grand Cayman's most popular dive.

ries that, because of the narrow shelf, there aren't a lot of sand flats to secure these ships, a concern especially during hurricane season. But there's little doubt that a few new wrecks will help lighten the load at Stingray City and other popular sites.

Finally, there's a third marine-related plan afoot: the Underwater Maritime Heritage Trail, and archaeologist Peggy Leshik-Denton of the National Museum is the mover and shaker behind this one. "The

idea is to select a historical wreck, map the site and create a shipwreck preserve," she said. "We want to interpret the cultural part as well as the marine and environmental parts." The wreck has been tentatively chosen: the *Glamis*, a Norwegian-flagged ship that sank off the East End in 1913. Now spread out over an area the size of a football field, the preserve should be open to visitors—who can dive or snorkel around the wreckage with a laminated informational card—later this year.

Clearly, Grand Cayman is in good hands, with environmentally conscious people like Nancy Easterbrook, Peggy Leshik-Denton and Steve Broadbelt shepherding its growth. They want to see their island evolve, while ensuring that it doesn't lose touch with its origins. They, like Bob Soto, want Grand Cayman's earlier self to remain a vital part of its present self.

When I asked Bob Soto his thoughts on all this, he said: "You want to know about the earlier ways? I'll tell you how it was. Go to the Sister Islands. They're like Grand Cayman was 30 years ago." He should know—so I decided to go and see for myself.

The Sisters

I arrived on Little Cayman, the smallest and flattest of the three islands, in time to dive its most spectacular site: Bloody Bay Marine Park. Bob Soto told me he'd discovered the wall here in the early '60s, and, in his opinion, nothing has compared ever since. With the top of the wall at just 15 to 20 feet and the abyss dropping 6,000 feet below, Bloody Bay offers a haunting sensation of existential endlessness; it's the rare diver who doesn't return to the boat seriously humbled.

I started at Jackson Wall, on the eastern end of Bloody Bay, and descended 95 feet. Beginning with a semi-dark swim-through, filled with white cryptic sponges on the ceiling and masses of bryozoans on black coral, I rose to 60 feet and was met by just about everything I was hoping to see on this dive: a spotted eagle ray, a stingray, a barracuda and a hawksbill turtle.

TOP DIVES (THE OTHER KIND)

Aqua Beach > In all fairness this isn't a dive, but a welcoming Carib-Mex restaurant with a lively bar frequented by underwater types. *West Bay Road, 345-946-6398.*

Coconut Joe's > The after-hours headquarters of the local dive scene, Joe's is a loose and friendly joint, serving casual food, island-brewed Stingray beer, and shot after shot of Jagermeister. *West Bay Road, 345-943-5637.*

The Lone Star > This good-time Tex-Mex place, decorated (if that's the word) with old T-shirts and sports-only TVs, has long been a divemaster's haunt. *West Bay Road, 345-945-5175.*

TANYA BURNETT



The dramatic drop-off at Bloody Bay Wall plunges into a 6,000-foot abyss.

Both under water and above, Little Cayman is totally unhurried. The fish—like an extroverted grouper known as Jerry, who hangs out at a site called Marilyn's Cut and enjoys being stroked like a cat—appear to be as relaxed as the islanders, who number about 150. There's little to do, and that's the way the locals prefer it. There's one free-standing restaurant, The Hungry Iguana (a few more are in the handful of resorts), and one no-frills shop. A barge arrives once a week with supplies from Grand Cayman, and if what you need isn't in the shipment, well, hard luck. (When I was there, the island had run out of gas and the next barge wasn't bringing any more—but this didn't seem to faze a soul.)

Only slightly bigger than its little Sister, Cayman Brac is the rockiest and roughest of all three islands. Most of its topside is a challenging limestone bluff, pockmarked with craters and bat-filled caves. Underwater, however, is another story: sheer walls, canyons, sand chutes, abundant marine life and wrecks make diving here a varied visual feast.

CARLOS VILLOCH (TOP); TANYA BURNETT (RIGHT)

Divers often head straight to the island's best-known wreck, the *Captain Keith Tibbets*, a former Russian destroyer sunk by the Cayman government in 1996. Bow to stern, the ship's in 50 to 80 feet of water, so divers



The Brac's Capt. Keith Tibbets, which was a Russian destroyer in its first life.

can easily swim through the top decks and circle the gun turrets. Or they'll go for a deeper dive, usually on the stunning north wall, which begins at 60 feet.

On my last afternoon in the Cayman Islands, I hiked into the Brac's bluff; T.J. Sevik, a young Bracker and nature guide, led the way. As we went, he shared bits of island lore: about medicinal plants, about caymanite (a semi-precious stone found only in the Caymans), about the habits of soldier crabs and fruit bats. He talked a lot about, as he called it, "the olden days." He even told me where I might find duppies—the islands' ghosts that, as he explained, reveal themselves only if you believe in them.

I listened, rapt. And then I realized: These islands reveal themselves, their true selves, in the exact same way—only if you want them to. SD

GET THERE > For more information on diving in the Cayman Islands, turn to *In Depth*, page 96, section 2.



Slip Beneath The Surface

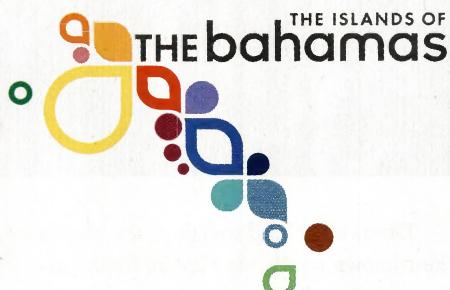
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The mother of all diveable Gulf rigs is Mobil 389, whose massive legs rise 400 feet from the seafloor in gin-clear water.



Towers of Power

Texas oil rigs—colossal energy plants plunging deep into the Gulf of Mexico—also happen to be thrilling artificial reefs, loaded with marine life. **TEXT & PHOTOS BY JESSE CANCELMO**

TEXAS LAYS CLAIM to more than 800 iron islands scattered across the Gulf of Mexico, from Sabine Pass near the Louisiana state line to Boca Chica at the Mexican border. From 10,000 feet in the air, they look like tiny dots of yellow, orange and green floating on a cobalt cover. Portals for the Gulf's oil

and gas patches, these rigs make up one of the largest artificial reef systems in the world. And Texas divers love them: They're close to home, there's no airline check-in required and frequent trips to these reefs won't break the bank.

There's surprising variety in the way Gulf rigs are sized, shaped and configured: Expect anything from a simple monopod or tripod structure with a single deck to a Texas-scale multistory platform with eight or more legs. The smaller ones are usually within sight of land, while the big ones tend to be in deeper water, up to 200 miles offshore. The coastal rigs attract big-time spearfishermen, who arrive each weekend with locked and cocked Magnums, licking their chops for some fresh red snapper, kingfish or amberjack. Divers usually opt for outlying rigs, where conditions can be downright Caribbean: swarms of colorful reef fish, toasty water and visibility in excess of 150 feet.

FREEPOR

Mobil 389

I'LL BE HONEST. The 50-mile trip from Houston to the Gulf gateway at Freeport is uninspiring at best. The terrain along Highway 288 is pancake-flat and the Freeport industrial panorama is definitely not a sight for sore eyes. But that's OK, because when I get that first hit of salt air and see a few bellowing smokestacks, I know I'm only minutes from a converted Gulf crew boat that'll take me off to an action-packed water wonderland.

There's a world-renowned site for every type of dive. For wrecks, it's the *Andrea Doria*; for walls, it's Little Cayman or the Red Sea. For rigs, it's got to be the Mobil 389 platform, located 100 miles southeast of Freeport. This mother of a rig is only a mile from the East Flower Garden coral reefs in the national marine sanctuary. The rig's main drilling deck is the size of a house lot and its hydraulic crane could erect a skyscraper. It's a guar-

antee you'll be awestruck by the sight of this mammoth structure plunging 400 feet down in gin-clear water.

Below the waterline, the profusion of reef fish makes 389 the highlight of any Flower Garden trip. The dive plan is a maximum depth of 100 feet, but everything you want to see is at 50 feet or less. The undaunted Spanish hogfish, cocoa damselfish and fairy basslets frolic around huge stands of purple tube sponges. If the ultra-deep bottom doesn't give you a kick, maybe the dozen small but feisty silky sharks that often cruise through the framework will.



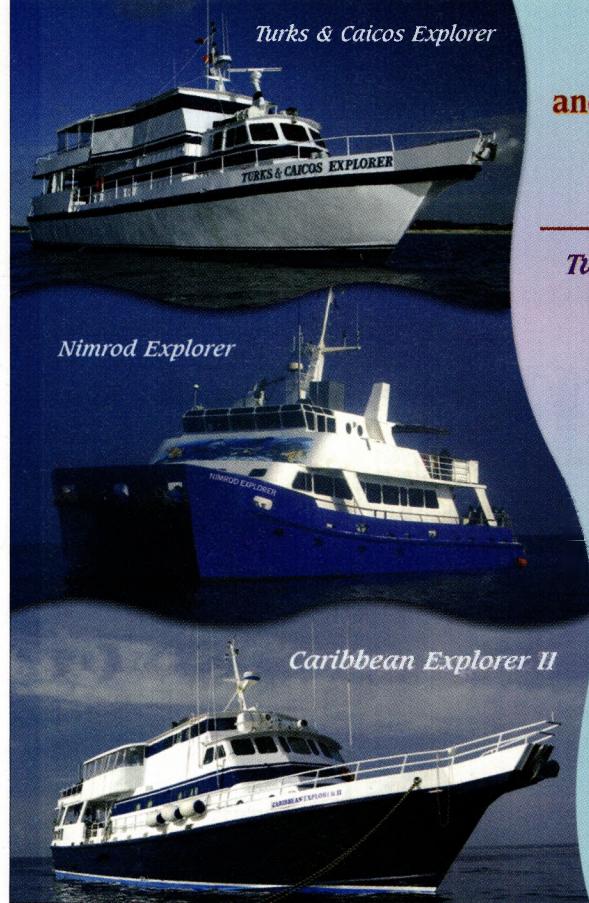
Atlantic spadefish are plentiful around the collection of rigs at Tenneco field.

GALVESTON

Tenneco Field

DURING THE SUMMER, if you're on I-45 between Dallas and Galveston, and you're not driving a pickup truck or an SUV (or hauling a boat on the last stretch south of Houston), it's a giveaway you're not a native Texan. But Galveston islanders welcome everyone, even Yankees, with open arms. If you've never been here, you need to take at least one full day to check out the Victorian charm and unique heritage of this beach city. But be sure to give yourself ample time to get your gear loaded up at the Galveston Yacht Basin. That's where the private boats and commercial six-packs cast off for some serious rig diving.

The Tenneco field, 25 miles south of Galveston, has at least six rigs encrusted with thick blankets of marine growth. Every time I visit my favorite of these, Galveston 393, there are schools of gray Atlantic spadefish and shimmering lookdowns weaving their way through the columns and crossbeams. And my last trip was no different: After splashing backward into the warm water and leaving the constant hum of the platform machinery behind, I was greeted by a giant sheepshead and a pair of barracuda. Seconds later, several spadefish cruised by and a school of look-



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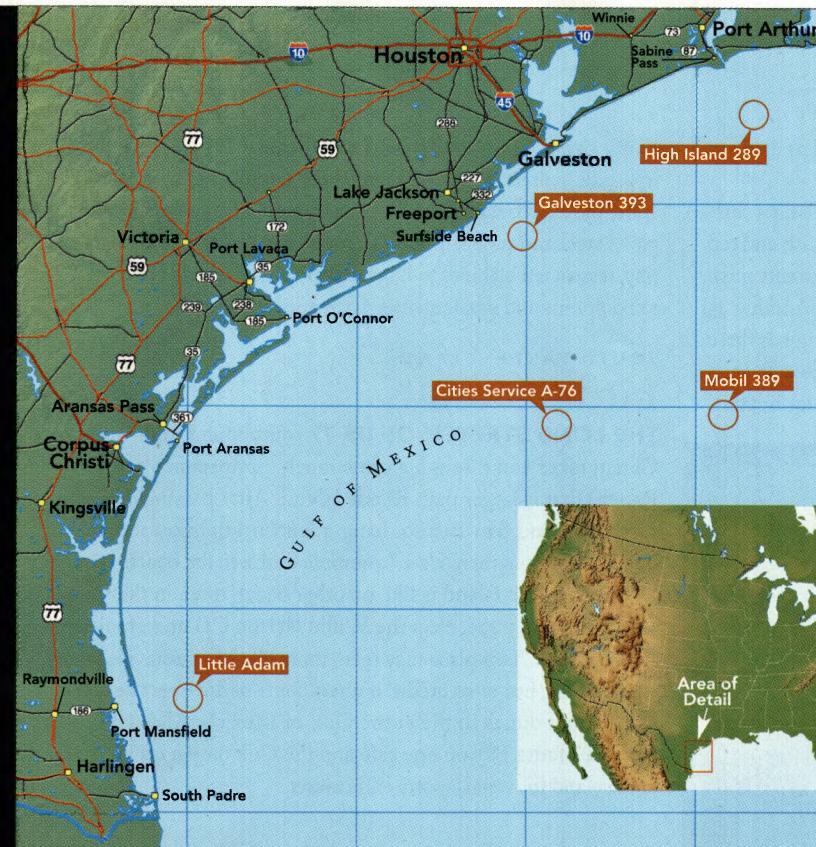
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downs swam below me. As I scanned the rig, I saw triggerfish and butterflyfish in a feeding mode, squirrelfish and cardinalfish frozen in place, and soapfish, graysbys and scorpionfish resting on horizontal beams.

CENTRAL TEXAS GULF

Cities Service

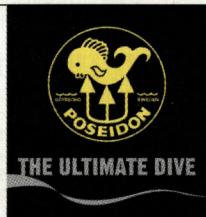
RIG DIVERS FROM AUSTIN and San Antonio favor the central Gulf cast-off points at Port Aransas and Port O'Connor. For one thing, it's

an easy drive to the coast on I-37 or Highway 71. And savvy divers are realizing what serious fishermen have known for years: The continental shelf in the central Texas Gulf is steeper than it is to the north or south. That means shorter boat trips to deeper, bluer water. But the biggest bonus Port Aransas and Port O'Connor offer is the greatest density of rigs anywhere along the Texas

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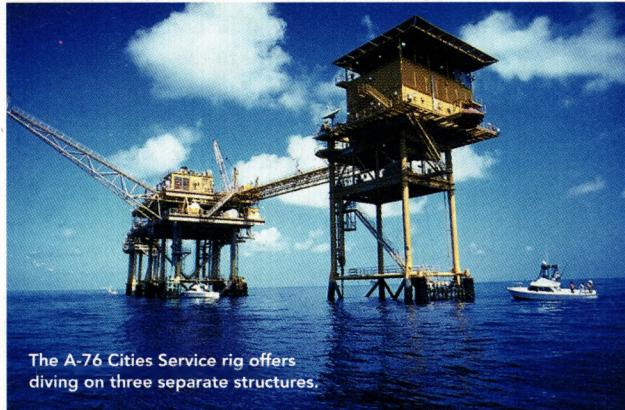


XSTREAM DEEP
[Approved for 600 feet]

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coast. In the 50 miles between the two ports, there are as many or more rigs to choose from.

Head 25 miles straight off Port O'Connor and you'll hit a cluster of at least 20 rigs loaded with amberjack, ling, kingfish and red snapper—in summer, when the Gulf Stream loop currents push closer to shore, visibility here can exceed 100 feet. Another 15 miles to the southeast, the huge A-76 Cities Service rig has three adjacent vertical structures connected above the surface with truss supports, so there are plenty of tie-off opportunities for boaters.



The A-76 Cities Service rig offers diving on three separate structures.

Every beam, brace and pipe is smothered with life. There are hydroids, corals, anemones, mussels, encrusting sponges and spiny oysters, to name just a few examples. This overgrown jungle of steel and pipe supports an impressive variety of fish, from tiny, tessellated blennies to huge amberjacks. Every so often, spotted dolphins and whale sharks make appearances, too.

SOUTH PADRE ISLAND

Little Adam

THE LONG STRETCH OF US 77 southbound from Corpus Christi takes you through a cattle ranch (aptly named the King Ranch) that is larger than Rhode Island. After passing through Harlingen and San Benito, hang a left on Highway 100 eastbound, and from there it's a 30-minute cruise to the beach.

South Padre Island is like no other beach town in the state. When you get there, eject the Willie Nelson CD and crank up Jimmy Buffet. This place may seem more like Margaritaville than south Texas, but to its credit, it offers some of the finest beaches and natural dunes in the entire Gulf of Mexico. And with the Laguna Madre Bay on one side and the Gulf on the other, it's a fantasyland for water-sports enthusiasts.



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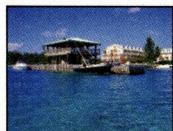
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A tiny rig-dweller.

There are several artificial reef dives within minutes of the South Padre jetties, but the prime-time rig dive is Little Adam, 40 miles due north. Some operators opt to take the long, leisurely ride up the coastline, while others run out of Port Mansfield, a tiny fishing community one-third of the way up the island. Little Adam stands in 180 feet of water, but all the action is in the 30- to 60-foot range. It's filled with most of the fish and a lot of the inverts you'd see on a natural reef, and then some. Residents include angelfish, butterflyfish, blue tangs and rock beauties. Look closely and you'll see arrowcrabs and bristleworms working their way through the hydroids and bryozoans that cover the framework. Expect to encounter a school of giant tarpon and at least one or two Goliath groupers. And don't be surprised if a pod of spinner dolphins comes by for a visit.

SABINE PASS

High Island 289

IN THE LATE 1960S, Janis Joplin put her hometown of Port Arthur on the map with her electric, high-energy blues. Not far



off the coast at nearby Sabine Pass and just a stone's throw from the Louisiana border, a cluster of high-energy performers of another sort have become the favorite playground for the steel-slinging, hit-'em-and-hang-on spearfishermen from East Texas and Louisiana.

Most of the rig diving is done another 40 to 60 miles offshore, where the count is exceptionally high. Because many of the clusters have four or five rigs within a one- or two-mile area, it's not uncommon to visit that many in a single day. The High Island 100 series and the Cameron 200-400 rigs are favorites for divers. You'll see schools of crevalle jacks sweep their way through the maze of steel. Expect brightly colored scrawled filefish, rock beauties, and occasional nurse sharks and loggerhead turtles. Keep an eye out, too, for spiny lobsters and octopuses backed into nooks around the well casings. **SD**

GET THERE > For more information on diving these Gulf of Mexico oil rigs, turn to *In Depth*, page 97, section 5.

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15 Ways To Save

You'll need a reason not to get away when the low-season rates are this good.

AMBERGRIS CAYE, BELIZE Belize for \$777

1 THE DEAL: Package includes seven nights at the SunBreeze Beach Hotel, four days of two-tank dives with Aqua Dives, round-trip air from Belize City, breakfast and hotel tax. Price is \$777 p.p., dbl. occ., and valid through Oct. 31, 2004. (888-462-8875, www.caribbeandivevacations.com)

ST. CROIX, U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS \$692 Per Couple

2 THE DEAL: Cane Bay Dive Shop, Hibiscus Beach Resort and Thrifty Car Rental team up to offer a three-, five- or seven nights' accommodations, rental car, unlimited day or night shore diving, snorkeling and boat dives daily. Mention Scuba Diving to get the \$692 per couple rate. Valid through Nov. 15, 2004. (800-338-3843, www.canebaycuba.com)

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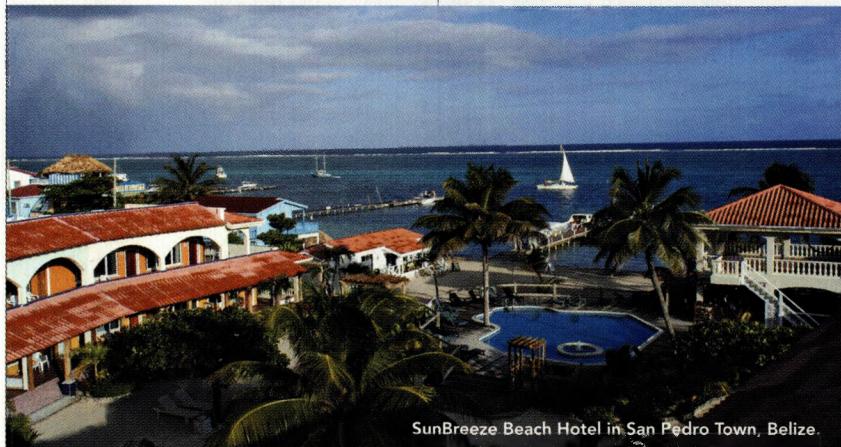
Straight-up Shore Diving

3 THE DEAL: Just in time for the Bonaire Dive Festival—June 5-19—Plaza Resort Bonaire offers seven nights' accommodations, six days of unlimited shore diving with Toucan Diving, tanks and weights, welcome cocktail, round-trip airport transfers, and all tax and service charges from \$652 p.p., dbl. occ., June and September 2004. Single- and two-tank boat upgrades are available upon request. (800-766-6016, www.plazaresortbonaire.com)

MAUI, HAWAII

Evening Interlude

4 THE DEAL: Lahaina Divers offers a special twilight night dive to the Molokini Crater every Thursday, July 1 through Aug. 31, 2004. Package includes tanks and weights, dive light, Cyalume light stick, gear transport to and from the dive vessel, snacks, beverages, deli-style sandwiches and homemade chocolate chip cookies. The charter price is \$119 p.p., plus tax. (800-998-3483, ldsales@maui.net)



SunBreeze Beach Hotel in San Pedro Town, Belize.

COZUMEL, MEXICO

Living la Vida Loca

5 THE DEAL: Free admission and drinks at the Viva Mexico Disco from 8 p.m. until 4 a.m., including one two-tank dive per day, full breakfast buffet, lunch and dinner via room service, unlimited drinks, taxes and gratuities. Rates are \$97 per night for divers, \$60 for nondivers, with a minimum stay of three nights. Valid until Dec. 19, 2004. Stay more than four nights and get a free night dive. (877-228-6747, www.casamexicanacozumel.com)

GRAND CAYMAN

Free Night and More

6 THE DEAL: This package from Red Sail Sports includes a free night's stay when you book three to six nights. Included are accommodations at the Marriott, daily two-tank morning boat dives, 10 percent watersports service charge, 10 percent hotel service charge and government tax, 50 percent off a night dive and 10 percent off retail items. Valid through Dec. 19, 2004. (877-RED-SAIL, www.redsailcayman.com)

SOLOMON ISLANDS, INDONESIA

Two Weeks in the South Pacific

7 THE DEAL: Join the MV Bilikiki for a 14-night trip Nov. 23 through Dec. 7, 2004. Dive the Floridas, Russells, Mary

Island and Marovo Lagoon. Includes accommodations, meals, unlimited diving and airport transfers for \$4,144 p.p., dbl. occ. Must book package by Nov. 15, 2004. (800-663-5363, www.bilikiki.com)

GRAND CAYMAN

Flight & Accommodations, \$799

8 THE DEAL: Seaview Hotel's package includes seven nights at the Seaview Hotel on Seven Mile Beach and nonstop airfare from Chicago for \$799

p.p., dbl. occ., taxes included. For \$399 p.p., add the dive package: six days of two-tank morning dives, and tanks and weights for unlimited shore diving. Mention Scuba Diving for a free welcome drink. Valid until Dec. 15, 2004; some blackout dates apply. (866-945-0558, www.seaviewdivers.com)

HURGHADA, EGYPT

Explore the Red Sea

9 THE DEAL: El Ghonamy Diving Center offers five days of diving (10 dives total), transfers, divemaster, and tanks and weights. Price is €130 p.p. Go for one day with two dives for €30. A four-day diving course is €275 p.p.,

including divemaster, equipment, certification and transfers. Take a full charter live-aboard with 16 people and receive a 15 percent discount. Valid through December 2004. (011-2065-547705, www.egdiving.com)

NEW PROVIDENCE, BAHAMAS

Super-saver Price

10 THE DEAL: South Ocean Golf and Beach Resort offers rooms for \$109 per night, which includes a two-tank dive with Stuart Cove's Dive Bahamas. Valid through Dec. 22, 2004; some blackout dates apply. (800-879-9832, www.dive-bahamas.com)

ABACO, BAHAMAS

Sample the Out Islands

11 THE DEAL: Package includes eight days, seven nights' stay at the Regattas, five days of two-tank dives with Keith's Dive Abaco!, taxes and service charges, and tanks and weights. Mention Scuba Diving to receive the \$599 p.p. discounted rate with a minimum group of four, a maximum group of six. (800-247-5338, www.diveabaco.com)

ST. CROIX, U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS

Dive the American Caribbean

12 THE DEAL: You get five nights at the Buccaneer Hotel and three days of two-tank boat dives with St. Croix Ultimate Bluewater Adventures (SCUBA). Package costs \$1,138, which includes the hotel tax and hotel energy surcharge. Valid through Nov. 15, 2004. Additional nights and dives are available. (www.stcroixscuba.com)

BAY ISLANDS, HONDURAS

Earn Free Spots

13 THE DEAL: Consider a vacation on the Bay Islands Aggressor IV with special group charter prices. Eight paying divers get two additional free

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spots, 14 paying divers earn four additional free spots. Charters start at \$1,495 p.p., dbl. occ., valid Sept. 4, 2004, through Jan. 1, 2005. Mention *Scuba Diving* for a complimentary 20-year anniversary travel pillow. (800-348-2628, www.aggressor.com)

MOOREA & RAIATEA,
FRENCH POLYNESIA

Free Black Pearl Pendant

14 **THE DEAL:** Dive Tahiti Blue's package starts on Moorea island with accommodations at Moorea Pearl Resort and diving with Moorea Blue Diving, then travel to Raiatea island with accommodations at Hawaiki Nui Raiatea and diving with Hemisphere Sub. Included are a total of eight nights and 10



DIVING SOLO

SINCE MARCH 2004, Explorer Ventures Ltd. offers divers the *Scuba Diving International (SDI)* solo diving course and required equipment rentals aboard each of its three live-aboard diving vessels. Solo diving is allowed only for properly certified and equipped divers. Explorer Ventures owns and operates the *Turks & Caicos Explorer*, based in Providenciales; the *Nimrod Explorer*, based in Cairns/Cooktown, Australia; and the *Caribbean Explorer II*, visiting Saba, St. Kitts and Statia in the northeastern Caribbean. (info@explorerventures.com, www.explorerventures.com)

ROD KLEIN

dives, all equipment, daily breakfast, transfers and inter-island air, as well as most taxes. Mention *Scuba Diving* for a free black pearl pendant. Price is approximately \$1,946 p.p., dbl. occ., until Dec. 31, 2004. International air is priced separately; special rates for groups are available. (www.divetahitiblue.com)

ST. CROIX, U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS

Triple Your Pleasure

15 **THE DEAL:** A DIVERSe Virgin Passport gives three two-tank dives from any three dive operators on St. Croix for \$250 p.p., through Dec. 31, 2004. Mention *Scuba Diving* for a free BC tag and T-shirt. (www.diversevirgin.com) **SD**

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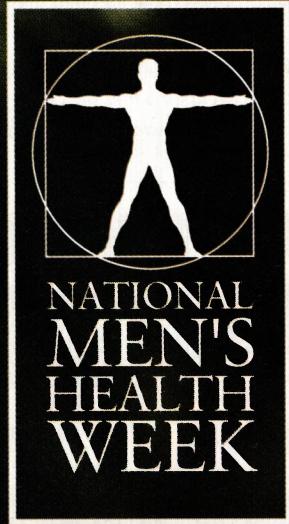
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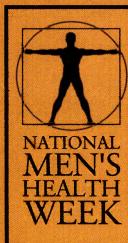


Stress is a breaking point for the American male. Pressure at work. Stress at home. You've got a big-time life, accompanied by big-time pressures. And if you

don't take positive steps to shed your stress, it can literally affect every part of your life, from short-term aches and pains to long-term health conditions.

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MEN'S HEALTH STRESS-BUSTING EVENTS



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Event Time: 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

NEW YORK

Union Square (17th & Broadway)

Event Time: 11:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

CHICAGO

Pioneer Court (401 North Michigan Ave)

Event Time: 11:00 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.

SAN FRANCISCO

Justin Herman Plaza (Market Street at Embarcadero)

Event Time: 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

LOS ANGELES

7+FIG (@ Ernst & Young Plaza)

Event Time: 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

MONDAY, JUNE 14

TUESDAY, JUNE 15

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 16

THURSDAY, JUNE 17

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READER RATINGS



With daily appearances, the winged giants of Yap have an on-time performance that most airlines would envy.

destination that can offer frequent encounters with these superstars will attract divers. Fortunately, *Scuba Diving* readers have been to these destinations and have rated dozens of them to name the best places in the world to swim with big animals.

(SCORE: 100)

1 French Polynesia

WHILE TAHITI and the other islands of French Polynesia are renowned for breathtaking topside vistas, our readers awarded the destination perfect marks for spectacular scenery of another kind: big animals. It's a rare dive in these islands when you don't see creatures at least as big as yourself. At Rangiroa, schools of gray reef sharks big enough to block the sun cruise the stiff tidal currents that rush through passes in the atoll. Regular shark feedings draw blacktip reef sharks and lemon sharks to The Tiki off Moorea. Manta rays swarm sites at Bora Bora and Manihi. At Nuku Hiva in the Marquesas archipelago, schooling hammerheads compete for divers' attention with mantas and the hundreds of melon-headed whales that congregate here daily. If that's not enough

big-animal action for you, head for Rurutu in the Austral Group where you can snorkel with humpback whales from July to October.

(SCORE: 96)

2 Yap, Micronesia

CLOSE-UP encounters with giant Pacific manta rays put Yap on the dive map, and are still the primary attraction at this Micronesian destination. Not only are the manta dives spectacular, they're as reliable as wild animals can possibly be—the dive operators all but guarantee a rendezvous. The big rays congregate near cleaning stations at sites like Mi'il Channel, where divers kneel on the bottom at 70 feet to watch them turn acrobatic somersaults overhead. The mantas are most active during the courtship rituals of the mating season, December to April.

(SCORE: 96)

3 Palau, Micronesia

PALAU'S most famous big-animal site offers the closest thing to a theater experience that you'll find under water. At Blue Corner, you simply clip yourself to the reef with

a reef hook, put a little air in your BC, and hover in place, watching the procession of large marine life cruise by. The parade regularly features a variety of sharks, including blacktip reef sharks and hammerheads. You might also get lucky and spot some other big fish, including sailfish or yellowfin tuna. Another big-animal hot spot is Ulong Channel, a narrow cut through the reef that funnels fish, divers and big sharks together on incoming tides. Watch for hungry gray reef sharks at the lagoon end of the channel waiting for schools of snappers and jacks to be washed in on the tide.

(SCORE: 92.1)

4 Galapagos Islands

THE GALAPAGOS ISLANDS sit at the intersection of two deep submarine ridges and no fewer than seven oceanic currents, including the cold Humboldt Current and warm equatorial current. This intense mixing zone attracts a diversity of marine life found nowhere else on earth, including the big stuff: manta rays, dolphins, sea lions and sharks galore. The shark roster here includes bull sharks, silvertips, whitetips, blacktips, Galapagos sharks, gray reef sharks and, of course, whale sharks and schooling hammerheads. Book a live-aboard for a week of nonstop big-animal action.

(SCORE: 89.7)

5 Cocos Island, Costa Rica

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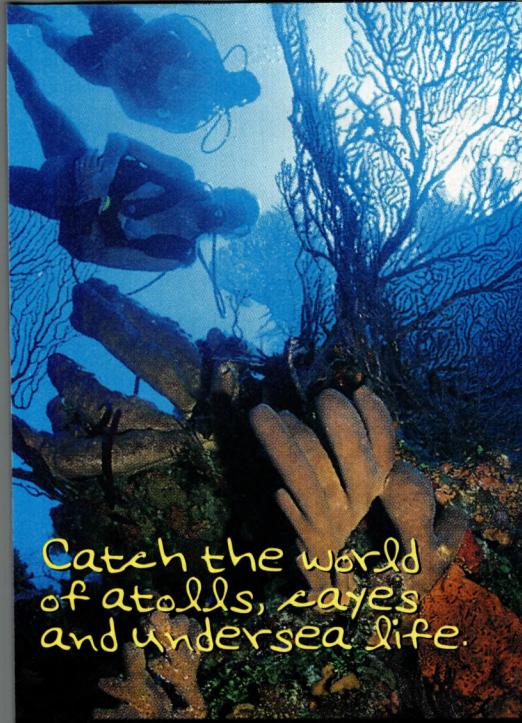
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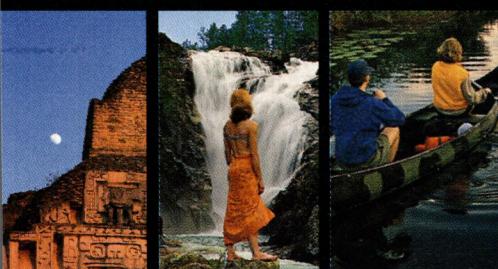
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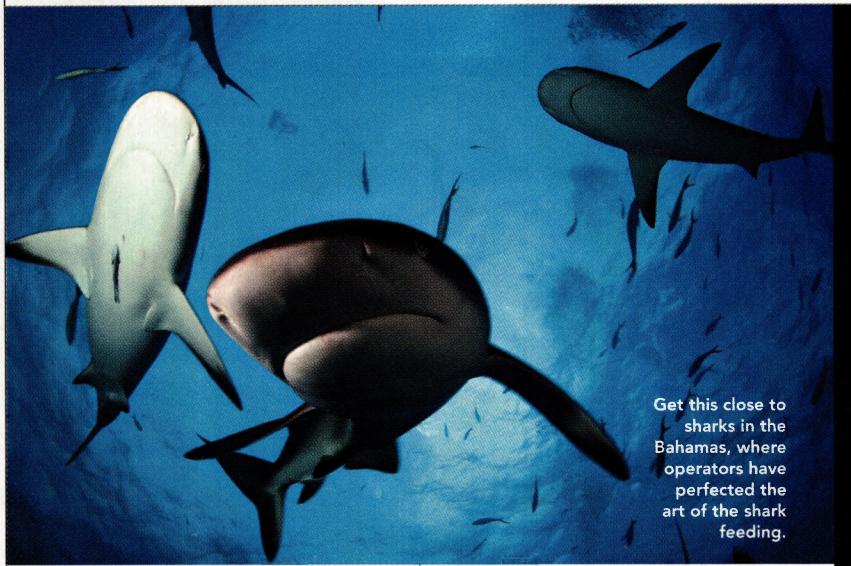
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READER RATINGS



Get this close to sharks in the Bahamas, where operators have perfected the art of the shark feeding.

(SCORE: 74.6)

7 Grand Bahama, Bahamas

THE FEATURED animals in UNEXSO's Dolphin Experience aren't wild, but they do offer a great opportunity to cavort with some of the most engaging creatures in the sea. Divers kneel on the sandy seafloor, and bottlenose dolphins follow a boat out to the site. You'll hear the clicks and squeaks of echolocation as they move with ballet-like grace through the group, pausing long enough to smile for your camera.

(SCORE: 77.1)

6 Bimini, Bahamas

SOME OF THE world's most reliable encounters with wild dolphins occur at White Sand Ridge on the flats of the Little Bahama Bank off Bimini. Live-aboards seek out the resident school of Atlantic spotted dolphins, and divers and snorkelers hit the water to watch the sleek animals feed in the sand and show off for visitors.

(SCORE: 71.4)

8 New Providence, Bahamas

THOUSANDS OF DIVERS a

HOW WE GOT THE SCORES

RESULTS ARE based on a response of more than 6,000 surveys. Readers rated dive destinations in a variety of categories on a scale of one to five. Scores listed here represent the percentage of fours (very good) and fives (excellent) awarded to each of these destinations in the big-animal category. A minimum number of responses was required for a destination to be included in these ratings.

year come to New Providence with one thing on their mind: sharks. Regular feedings occur at mid-depth reef sites like Shark Alley, Shark Arena and Shark Runway, where an abundance of Caribbean and blacktip reef sharks drop in for lunch. For a different kind of thrill, try the Shark Buoy, where you'll float in the bottomless blue, watching open-ocean silky sharks that gather here to feed.

(SCORE: 69.2)

9 Cay Sal Bank, Bahamas

A VARIETY OF big animals cruising the Gulf Stream find their way to the remote Cay Sal Bank in the Bahamas. Tiger sharks, hammerheads and whale sharks can occasionally be spotted here. But the most regular shark encounters happen at Shark Hole, a deep, gaping blue hole in the seafloor. Nurse sharks doze around the rim of the hole, and Caribbean reef sharks rise from the darkness to feed on the offered bait.

(SCORE: 69)

10 North Carolina

THE MOST POPULAR dive sites off the Outer Banks of North Carolina are the many wrecks that have gone down in the Graveyard of the Atlantic. These wrecks also happen to be the best place in North America to see the toothy grin of the sand tiger shark up close. Without being baited or fed, sand tigers congregate at many of the best wrecks, including the *Papoose*, the *Atlas* and the *Caribsea*.

SD

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Bring your nerves of steel...

This special Shark Awareness photography workshop will give you the opportunity to experience sharks on an extremely intimate level with a select group of underwater photographers. You will receive expert coaching and hands-on experience from Stephen Frink, master of underwater photography.

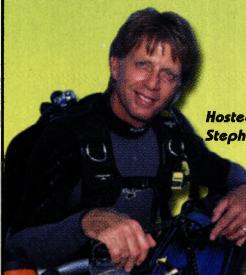
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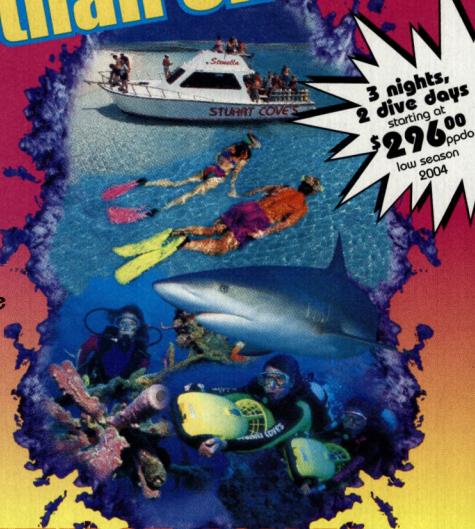
So much more than Sharks

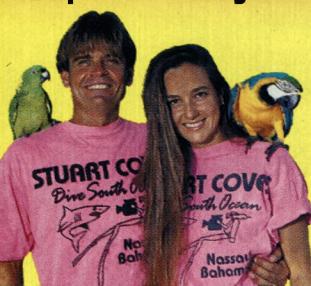
"For 25 years we have been exploring the reefs, wrecks and coral walls of Nassau. During this time we have discovered the best of what Nassau has to offer. So whether you're visiting us for the first time or returning for the 10th time, we always have something new and unique to amaze and thrill you."

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Now What?!

Overpowering currents! Raging storms! Marauding sharks! Your dive instructor never mentioned you'd have days like this. Our exclusive survival guide will show you how to get home safely from a dive that has gone from bad to worst.

IT'S NATURAL TO THINK that accidents always happen to other divers, those statistical John and Jane Does who court disaster by idiotically violating every rule in the book. And it's true, they take most of the heat. But even the most experienced and responsible divers aren't immune to bad rolls of the dice. How bad? Imagine getting tangled in one of the following 10 situations, each of which is guaranteed to scare the bejesus out of you. We'll start by saying the unwritten first rule for each dilemma is to remain calm and avoid panicking as you assess your nasty predicament. The next step? Read on.

BY GORDON BASS

ILLUSTRATIONS BY MATT MADDEN





#1

Surviving Extreme Weather

YOU SURFACE TO FIND the perfect storm raging, you're being pummeled by 10-foot swells, and the dive boat's either sunk or headed for shelter (the jerks!).

Sounds unlikely, but it can (and does) happen. **NOW WHAT?**

1. Inflate your BC. You'll need every ounce of energy to stay warm and slow the onset of hypothermia, and treading water to stay afloat increases your cooling rate by 35 percent.

2. Get into the HELP (Heat Escape Lessening Posture) position. Tuck your legs up to your chest and wrap your arms around them, which will slow heat loss from your body by 50 percent. Your survival time in open water varies greatly depending on water temperature, your body size, and whether you're wearing a full wetsuit; survival time is almost unlimited in 80-degree Caribbean waters, while it's limited to one or two hours in water that's colder than 50 degrees.

3. Signal for help. During the day, a shiny object—anything from your mask to a watch crystal—is one of the best signal devices available. Sweep the horizon to flash reflected light at possible search vessels or aircraft (and hope someone's reported you missing). This signal can be seen up to 40 miles away.

4. Swim for shore only if rescue seems unlikely. If you're nearing a rugged shoreline, drop your tank before you land so it doesn't beat you senseless against the rocks.

#2

RUNNING OUT OF AIR WITH NO BACKUP

YOU'RE ON THE DEEPEST DIVE OF YOUR LIFE, pushing the limits of recreational diving at 130 feet, and suddenly you're sucking on a vacuum. Oh yeah, and your backup's missing. So is your buddy. It's time for an emergency ascent, but it's a long way up. **NOW WHAT?**

1. Drop everything you're carrying. That means ditching your weight belt, of course, and anything else, except your tank—that's holding you down. Leave any handheld tools behind, and that includes the expensive cam-

era. You really don't want this recorded anyway.

2. Swim toward the surface (an obvious but necessary point).
3. Exhale during your ascent to let expanding air escape from your lungs. As you ascend and external pressure drops, your tank may provide another breath or two of air.
4. Use the oral inflator to fill your BC at the surface.
5. Signal for help with the universally recognized distress signal—a hand waved above the head.
6. Once out of the water, monitor yourself for signs of decompression sickness. Remember that it may take more than six hours for them to become apparent. Even mild symptoms must be treated.

#3

GETTING DISORIENTED WHEN YOUR COMPUTER CONKS OUT

ACTUALLY, let's make this one a little worse: not just your computer, but also every instrument on your wrist (you've stumbled upon some kind of magnetic vortex, apparently). You're not sure how deep you are, how long you've been down, or how to plan your safety stop. You're flying blind. **NOW WHAT?**

1. Stop immediately and get your bearings. You've been checking your depth regularly and noting landmarks—you have, haven't you?—so you should have a rough idea of how deep you are. And if you're on or near the bottom, you should know the maximum depth of your dive.
2. Get your buddy's attention. Signal that something's wrong with a waggle of the hand, then signal an ascent.
3. Begin a controlled ascent. If you were keeping an eye on your pressure gauge before it conked out, you should have a pretty good idea of how much air is left in your tank. In most cases, it won't be necessary to make an emergency ascent.
4. Make a safety stop at 15 feet. The longer you can stay here, the better, especially if you were nearing required decompression.

#4

Saving Yourself from a Panicked Buddy

YOU'VE HEARD THE GRIM TALES of divers who hyperventilate, overbreathe their regulators and spit them out, and then drown with 1,000 psi left in their tank. Well, today that out-of-control

diver is your very own buddy, and you're getting a

crash course in the psychology of panic, which is far more common (and potentially dangerous) than equipment failure. **NOW WHAT?**

1. Approach cautiously when you see your buddy is in trouble. Use hand signals to determine his state of mind. Is he signaling that he's out of air? Or is he flailing dangerously?
2. Don't let a desperate buddy grab for your regulator and endanger you both. If he's out of air, unclip your octopus and hold it out toward him. Hold onto your buddy's BC—this way you can keep him at arm's length and prevent him from drifting away.
3. Let your buddy re-establish his breathing rhythm, unless he's still panicking, in which case you should proceed to the next step.
4. Make a controlled emergency ascent. If you don't have an octopus and your buddy's too confused to buddy-breathe, he'll do everything possible to rush to the surface and hold his breath all the way up. Don't let him.
5. At the surface, inflate both BCs and signal for pickup.



#5

FIGHTING AN EXTREME CURRENT

FOR SOME REASON you're diving in Slingsby Channel, British Columbia, completely oblivious to the fact that it's home to the strongest current in the world. This ignorance is suddenly swept away by a massive 16-knot current that's pulling you out to sea. Or maybe you're being pulled away from the shore by a riptide that seems to be sucking you toward the horizon. **NOW WHAT?**

RIPTIDE

1. Don't try to fight the current. Most riptide deaths result from swimming against the current to the point of exhaustion.
2. Swim parallel to the shore, across the riptide. If a riptide is sucking you away from the shore, it's better to wind up a mile down the beach than a mile out at sea. Most riptides are less than 100 feet wide and weaken rapidly on the seaward side of the sandbars that create them.

CURRENT

1. Again, don't fight it. Defeat is inevitable, even if it's flowing at what seems like a moderate three or four knots. Instead, ascend to the surface. Simple, right?
2. At the surface, inflate your BC and signal for pick-up. One arm held straight up with a clenched fist means you're OK, but need to be picked up. Use a surface signaling device if the boat crew can't spot you.

#6

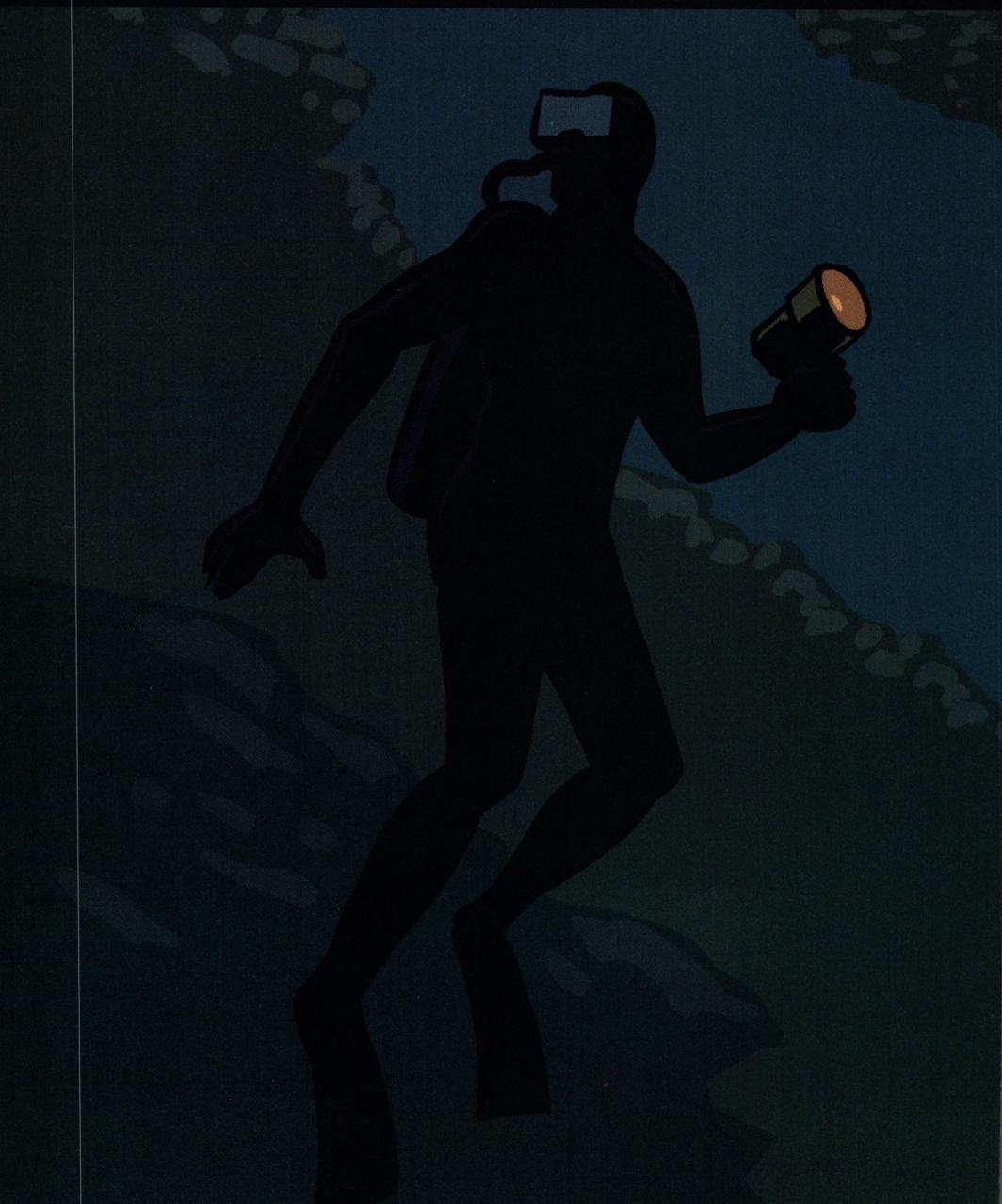
WE DON'T WANT TO KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING on a night dive without a backup light, but suddenly you're enveloped in darkness, you've lost your buddy, and you can barely tell which way is up. **NOW WHAT?**

1. Orient yourself. Feel the exhaust bubbles coming out of your regulator and make sure you know which way is up. Now maintain your depth and location. Pay attention to your ears, which will tell you if you're ascending or descending.

Getting Lost Under Water at Night. And Your Light Dies. And You've Lost Your Buddy.

light is shining away from you, it will be hard to see.

3. Bang on your tank four times. The sound will attract your buddy's attention. You can also shout into your regulator—people respond to their names even when they can't seem to hear anything else. See, ego can be your friend.
4. If you spot your buddy, approach slowly. Think about it: How would you respond to a mysterious, silent sea creature grabbing you in the inky blackness of a night dive?
5. If you don't spot your buddy in one minute, ascend and look for him on the surface. It's better than both of you being lost in the dark.





#7

YES, YOU'RE MORE LIKELY TO GET mauled by a lion than bitten by a shark (well, maybe not under water). And yes, reported shark incidents declined to an all-time low of just 55 unprovoked attacks in 2003, resulting in four deaths. But let's say you're exceptionally tasty. You're at 100 feet with a blood-spurting leg stump.

NOW WHAT?

Losing a Limb to a Shark

The unexpected tang of human flesh mixed with neoprene is an off-putting taste to all but the hungriest sharks. Only problem: Your spilled blood can attract other sharks.

2. Make an emergency ascent (see "Running Out of Air with No Backup").
3. Stem blood loss. Even with a severed limb, you probably won't bleed to death because shock causes muscles at the site of the injury to contract and pinch blood vessels shut. Still, once you're back on the boat apply pressure to the grisly wound with a clean cloth or bandage. Use a tourniquet only as a last resort if you can't stop the bleeding any other way; you can use anything from twist-ties to your knife strap.
4. Give yourself a hand. If you're able to retrieve the severed limb, keep it cool but don't place it directly on ice, which causes tissue damage. Instead, seal it in a plastic bag before putting it on ice. This will preserve the limb for up to 18 hours, enough time to find a doctor who can attempt to reattach it.
5. Seek medical attention. Immediately.

#8

GETTING CAUGHT IN A DOWNDRAFT

DURING A WALL DIVE you suddenly find yourself hurtling downward at an accelerating rate, caught in a downdraft that's overpowering you. **NOW WHAT?**

1. If you're near a wall or a very large wreck, kick rapidly away from it. Downdrafts are often caused when a horizontal current strikes a wall and deflects downward, or when a current passes over a large object and sinks on the far side like an underwater waterfall. A few kicks should get you into more stable water.
2. If you can't kick out of the downdraft, inflate your BC to slow your descent. But keep one hand on your purge valve so you can dump air as soon as you're out of the vertical current; you don't want to rocket upward when you've escaped the current.
3. If you're on a wall dive, grab it to stop yourself from moving downward, and pull yourself along the wall horizontally to free yourself from the current. This "Spiderman" move is a last resort, because you'll probably slash yourself up pretty well on the wall—and of course you wouldn't want to damage a coral wall, right?





OF COURSE WE DON'T NEED TO SAY THIS, but we will: If you're not specifically trained for wreck penetration, you shouldn't be in there in the first place.

Getting Trapped in a Wreck

Getting tangled in invisible monofilament is one thing; getting pinned by a ton of steel is another. You're inside and you're stuck. **NOW WHAT?**

1. Determine where you're caught. Move each part of your body to figure out where the resistance is, but do it gently. If you've snagged a hose, you don't want to slice it on jagged metal. Also, minimize movement so you don't stir up silt and reduce visibility.
2. Once you've found the entanglement, use your knife to cut yourself free. If it's only fishing line, hold it with one hand while you carefully cut it with the other.
3. Get your buddy. If you're pinned by a physical object, it's time to be thankful you're diving with a buddy who can add a little muscle; signal that you have a problem with a side-to-side motion of your light in a wide arc.
4. Don't see your buddy? Cover your light momentarily and you may see your partner's light. Nothing? Shout. Bang on metal.
5. If you free yourself and you're still alone, exit the wreck and wait by the entry point. If you've become disoriented, cover your beam again and you may see light entering from an opening in the structure.



#10

GETTING BENT WITHOUT OXYGEN OR A RECOMPRESSION CHAMBER

DUE TO EITHER POOR judgment or bad luck, you're showing the classic signs of decompression sickness after a dive—from pain in your joints to numbness to paralysis—and you're a full day from an oxygen supply and the nearest recompression chamber.

Later on you can figure out what went wrong, but **NOW WHAT?**

1. Don't go back down. Sure, it seems like diving back down to 100 feet to recompress makes sense. But pressure alone won't squeeze those bubbles out of your bloodstream; even in a chamber, it's a high level of oxygen that does most of the work. Besides, you want to stay warm; nitrogen outgasses more slowly when your body is cold.
2. Do go back down. Huh? Yes, this contradicts what we just told you, but according to the U.S.

Navy Diving Manual, "recompression in the water should be considered an option of last resort, to be used only when no recompression facility is on site and there is no prospect of reaching a recompression facility within 12 hours." This is undeniably risky: By the time you're showing even mild symptoms, the dangers far outweigh the benefits.

3. Seek medical attention and possible evacuation. Contact Divers Alert Network by phone at (919) 684-8111 to find the nearest recompression chamber,

even if it's more than a day away. The window of opportunity for treatment doesn't close completely until a full two weeks pass. If you're being transported in an unpressurized plane, the pilot should fly as low as possible; the decreased pressure at high altitude may worsen your symptoms.

Special thanks to William C. Hargrave, Master Diver, Naval Diving and Salvage Training Center; Dan Nord, Medical Director, Divers Alert Network; and Dan Crowell, president of Deep Explorers, Inc.



Cinnamon Bay, St. John, as seen from Peter Peak. The nearby British Virgin Island of Tortola is in the distance.



BY STEVE SIMONSEN

Log

U.S. Virgin Islands

IN 1917, the United States paid a cool \$25 million to Denmark in exchange for three Caribbean islands. While this was more than the U.S. had ever spent to acquire land, in hindsight there's no doubt about it: It was a spectacular bargain. Though St. John, St. Thomas and St. Croix (collectively the U.S. Virgin Islands) were purchased for strategic reasons—during World War I they were a prized Caribbean outpost—travelers soon saw other upsides to the deal: abundant natural diversity, splendid diving and a distinctive flavor to each island.

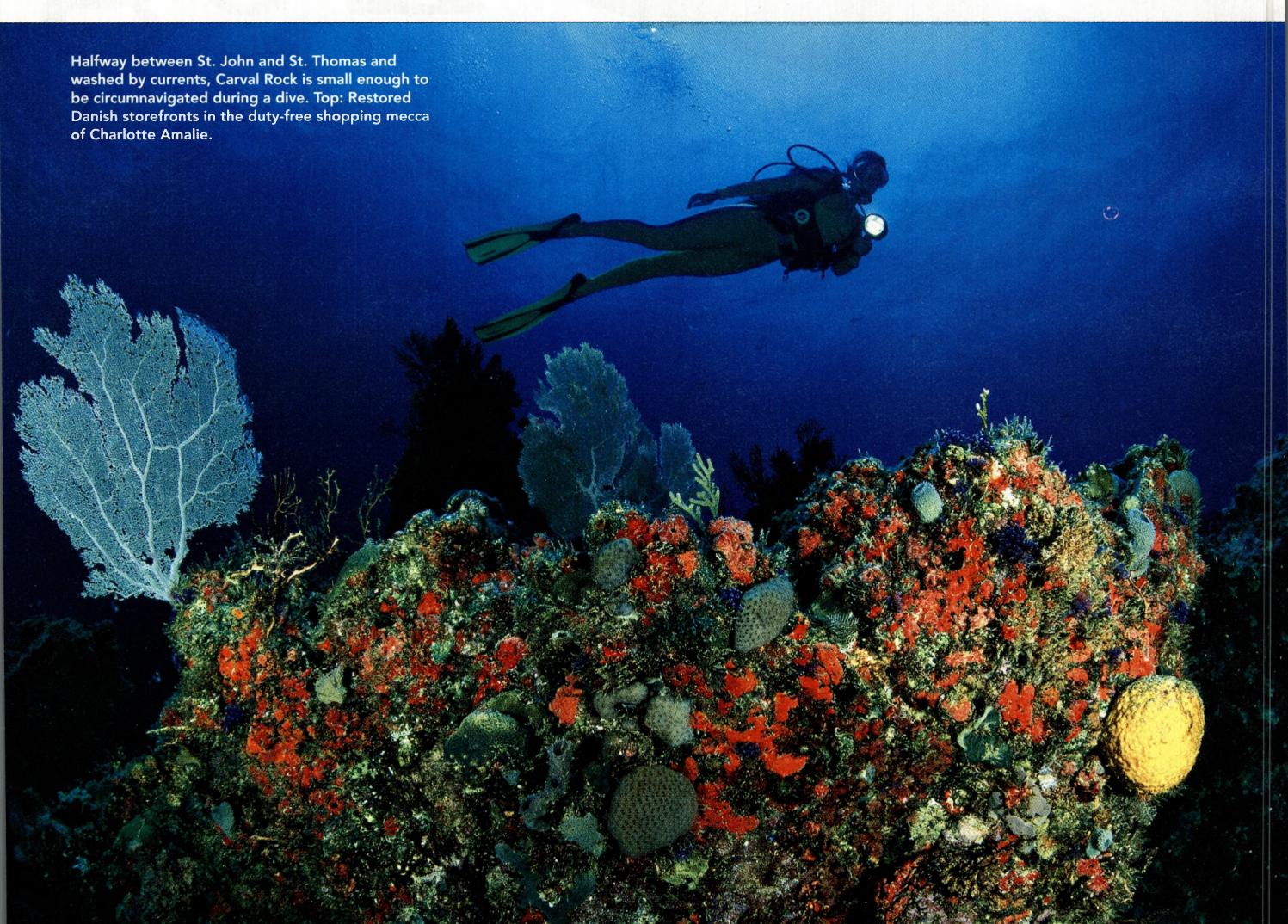
St. Croix, the largest of the three, sits atop the Venezuelan Basin, which makes it a prime spot for wall diving. St. Thomas is surrounded by dozens of uninhabited cays that provide calm anchorages for reef exploration. And just two miles from St. Thomas, across Pillsbury Sound, lies the pristine isle of St. John. Blessed with the lion's share of natural beauty, St. John is home to the magnificent Virgin Islands National Park, which occupies a full two-thirds of the island and helps keep the "Virgin" in Virgin Islands.

(A V I S U A L T O U R
A B O V E A N D B E L O W)

FOR DIVERS, THE U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS offer unbeatable conditions: Visibility is often 70 feet or better, the water is reliably warm, and you can count on a vast and colorful array of marine life in the sunlit oceanscape. Best of all, the islands have the bases covered, site-wise. Want a wall dive? St. Croix is the place. Try Salt River Canyon, where the walls start at 30 feet and plunge to 1,000. Off the nearby northwest coast is the wall at Cane Bay, which is action-packed with life at 40 to 60 feet and then drops off into the deep blue. Want shipwrecks? St. Thomas is your best bet. Here, among many others wrecks, the coral-encrusted World War I tramp steamer *Cartanza Sr.* lies in 35 feet of water, the Coast Guard tender *Major General Rogers* is in 64, and the *Wit Shoal*, a 400-foot cargo ship, sits upright in 90. A thrilling night dive? Make your way to St. Croix's Frederiksted Pier, where a giant stride off its concrete side puts you in 20 feet of water amidst orange ball anemones, batfish and seahorses.



Halfway between St. John and St. Thomas and washed by currents, Carval Rock is small enough to be circumnavigated during a dive. Top: Restored Danish storefronts in the duty-free shopping mecca of Charlotte Amalie.





Stunning topside scenery is the hallmark of St. John,
the most breathtaking of the Virgin trio.



LAND-BASED ACTION (or inaction, as the case may be) can range from lying in a hammock and sipping a Bushwhacker to hiking the Virgin Islands National Park on St. John. Cruz Bay—affectionately dubbed “Love City”—serves as the park’s headquarters and is a logical first stop for visitors interested in taking ranger-led hikes, bird-watching, or exploring the roads by jeep or scooter. The park’s network of trails winds through woodlands, alongside waterfalls and past ruins of former sugar mills. And, since St. John boasts 51 bays and 49 miles of convoluted coastline, all roads seem to lead to secluded white-sand beaches.



The heavily encrusted pylons of St. Croix's Frederiksted Pier form vertical reefs that come alive when the sun goes down. At left, from top: foureye butterflyfish, moon jellyfish and sponge brittle star.



Kayaking at Honeymoon Beach, St. John.
Below: A ranger-led tour through St. John's national park.



A VISIT TO THE ISLANDS isn't complete without a stop in Charlotte Amalie, one of the most picturesque harbors in the Caribbean. Home to charmingly restored Danish colonial architecture, venerable brick buildings and shaded alleyways, Charlotte Amalie is now a cosmopolitan duty-free shopping mecca. It's also the busiest cruise ship port in the Eastern Caribbean, so if its buzz makes you crazy, remember that you're never very far from transportation out of town: Ferries connect all three islands, and seaplanes link St. Croix, St. Thomas and Puerto Rico. For the intrepid, there's even inter-island kayaking, which some local operators will arrange for you on a weekly basis. **SD**

GET THERE For more information about the U.S. Virgin Islands, turn to *In Depth*, page 96, section 3.

Time Machines

Seven precision watches designed
to go deep and look good doing it.

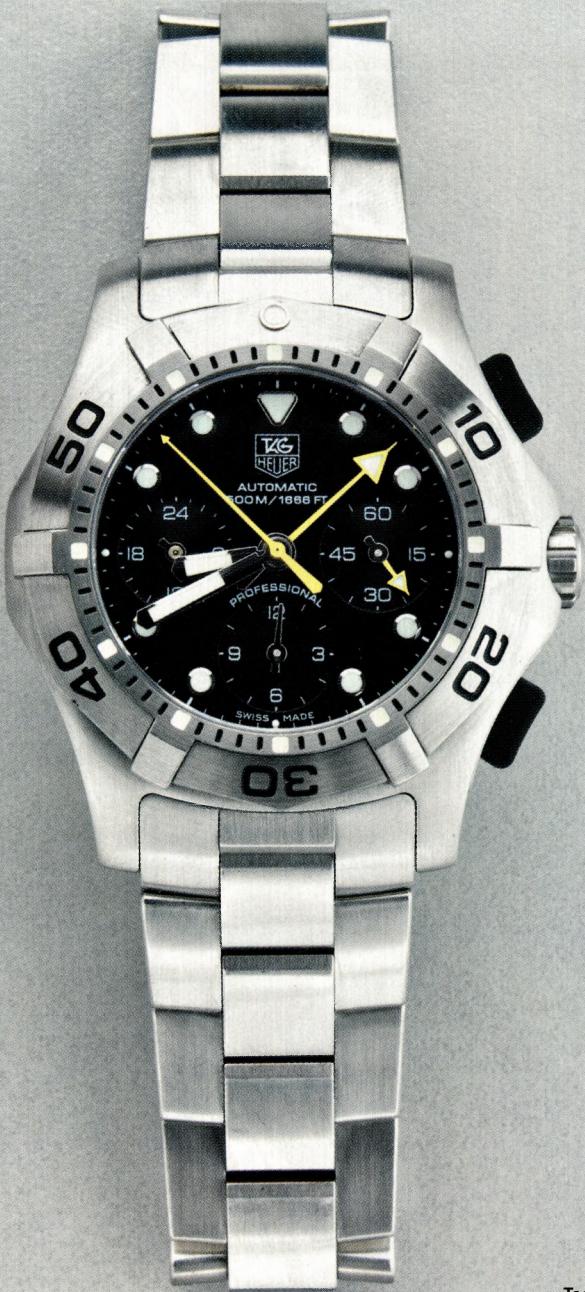
By John Brumm

IN THE OLD DAYS, A RUGGED ANALOG DIVE WATCH was a critical piece of diving equipment, both for tracking bottom time and monitoring air consumption. But then submersible pressure gauges arrived on the scene, followed by automatic bottom-timers, and now we have full-function dive computers, all of which stole the traditional dive watch's thunder.

So why haven't analog dive watches gone the way of the double-hose regulator? Simple: They look really cool on your wrist whether you're diving a wreck at 110 feet or giving a sales pitch on the 110th floor. Even a nondiver who doesn't know a BC from a BMW can appreciate the heft and rugged styling of a precision timepiece that's ready for anything.

In a sea of pretty faces, the challenge is finding the right blend of dive-ready features and fashion for the dollar. To help you get started, here are seven leading analog models. All the watches shown here have the basics: screw-down crowns, one-way rotating bezels, luminous faces and hour markers. And all of them are depth-rated well beyond recreational diving limits. Some will set you back the price of an entire set of high-end dive gear, but when was the last time a regulator got you noticed after the dive?





Tag Heuer
2000 Aquagraph



Bell & Ross Hydromax

Tag Heuer 2000 Aquagraph A rare blend of true dive functionality and good looks, the Aquagraph weighs in at a satisfying **half-pound** when fitted with the stainless-steel bracelet band (five ounces with the rubber strap). Classic styling offers decent dial face readability, very good bezel readability and excellent luminescence. Water-resistant to **500 meters**, the Aquagraph has six features dedicated to diving, including a patented auto-locking bezel that you push down to turn and a push-button chronograph with big, easy-to-read hands that you could use to time a safety stop. Made in Switzerland. Two-year limited warranty. **\$2,800** with the steel bracelet; **\$2,500** with the rubber strap.

Bell & Ross Hydromax The Hydromax is a light, thin watch with a simple dial face and large numbers offset in either white or matte-black. But behind the unassuming looks lies some serious engineering. It's the only watch in the world designed to go to **11,100 meters**. Bell & Ross filled the entire case with a proprietary oil and gave it a flexible rubber back that adjusts as the oil expands or contracts. The Hydromax offers very good dial and bezel readability and excellent luminescence, including the secondhand. It comes packaged in a watertight case with technical notes, three straps (a semi-rigid plastic strap, a synthetic fabric strap with Velcro fastening, and a stainless-steel bracelet) and a special assembly tool. It carries a one-year warranty. **\$2,400**.

Luminox Ultimate Navy SEAL Steel Dive Series 8202

This is a lot of watch for the money. Made with a quartz movement, a scratch-resistant sapphire glass crystal with anti-reflective coating and a stainless-steel case with crown protector, the Navy SEAL Steel offers a clean dial face with big numbers and big hands for very good readability. The bezel reads even easier, and luminescence is excellent, and this includes the secondhand. The watch is water-resistant to **200 meters** and



Luminox Ultimate Navy SEAL
Steel Dive Series 8202



weighs **6.5 ounces** with its extendable solid link stainless-steel bracelet (for use over a wetsuit). Also available with a polyurethane strap. Made in Switzerland. One-year warranty. **\$500**.

Kobold Arctic Diver An extra-thick synthetic sapphire crystal and special lubricant keep the Arctic Diver ticking even in frigid temperatures. A titanium case and bracelet make it a very lightweight (about **4.5 ounces**) timepiece. The dial and bezel are both nice-looking, offering very good readability. Rated to **300 meters**. Made in Germany. One-year limited warranty. **\$2,350**.

Citizen 1000 Meter Professional Diver A serious-looking watch with a solid titanium case, and an extra-thick scratch-resistant sapphire crystal, the Professional Diver sports two unique features: a detachable bezel that simplifies cleaning, and a screw-down crown that's positioned at the 9 o'clock position. Water resistant to **1,000 meters**, the watch weighs **5 ounces** with its rubber wrist strap (a wetsuit extension is included). Made in Japan. One-year warranty. **\$1,750**.

Timex Reef Gear W-92 The most affordable watch of the group, the Reef Gear W-92 comes with a stainless-steel case and bracelet, a mineral glass crystal and decent dial face and bezel readability. The watch provides very good luminescence in low-light conditions, although the secondhand can't be seen in the dark. The watch weighs **5.5 ounces** and is water-resistant to **200 meters**. Made in the Philippines (movement) and China (bracelet). One-year limited warranty. For \$5, U.S. buyers can extend this warranty for another four years. **\$65**.

Breitling Chrono Superocean With a self-winding mechanical movement and a cambered sapphire crystal that's glare-proofed on both sides, the Superocean has only fair dial and bezel readability, but very good luminescence—although the secondhand isn't visible in the dark. The watch weighs **5 ounces** with a rubber strap. It's also available with a stainless-steel bracelet. The Swiss-made Superocean is water-resistant to **500 meters** and carries a two-year warranty. **\$3,075**.

GET MORE For manufacturer information on these watches, turn to *In Depth*, page 96, section 4.



Citizen 1000 Meter Professional Diver



Timex Reef Gear W-92



Kobold Arctic Diver



Breitling Chrono Superocean



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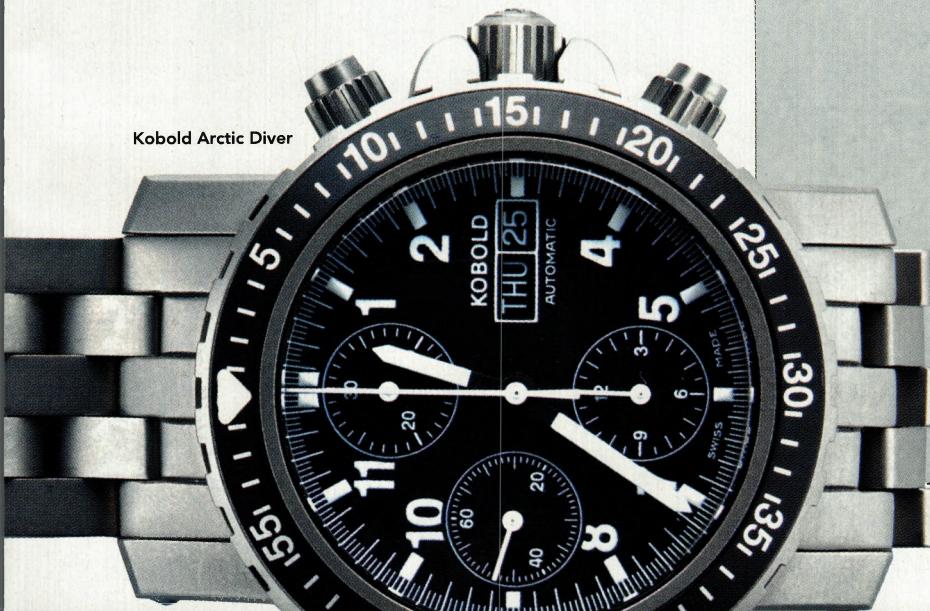
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Timex Reef Gear W-92 The most affordable watch of the group, the Reef Gear W-92 comes with a stainless-steel case and bracelet, a mineral glass crystal and decent dial face and bezel readability. The watch provides very good luminescence in low-light conditions, although the secondhand can't be seen in the dark. The watch weighs **5.5 ounces** and is water-resistant to **200 meters**. Made in the Philippines (movement) and China (bracelet). One-year limited warranty. For \$5, U.S. buyers can extend this warranty for another four years. **\$65.**

Breitling Chrono Superocean With a self-winding mechanical movement and a cambered sapphire crystal that's glare-proofed on both sides, the Superocean has only fair dial and bezel readability, but very good luminescence—although the secondhand isn't visible in the dark. The watch weighs **5 ounces** with a rubber strap. It's also available with a stainless-steel bracelet. The Swiss-made Superocean is water-resistant to **500 meters** and carries a two-year warranty. **\$3,075.**

GET MORE > For manufacturer information on these watches, turn to *In Depth*, page 96, section 4.



Kobold Arctic Diver



Citizen 1000 Meter Professional Diver



Timex Reef Gear W-92



Breitling Chrono Superocean



LESSONS FOR

life

by Michael Ange

FILE :

72
#

(THIS IS A TRUE STORY,
BUT THE NAMES HAVE
BEEN CHANGED.)

OUT OF BREATH

Breathing from the wrong gas supply didn't kill Sam—heart disease and obesity got him first.

SAM FLAILED AT THE SURFACE, struggling forward against the current. He had never been in good physical shape, and now the extra bulk of the twin tanks on his back and the pony bottles slung underneath each arm seemed to make swimming all the harder. So did the extra air trapped like a balloon in his dry suit. He was making slow headway, but after more than a minute of hard kicking, the anchor line was still far away. Sucking hard against the regulator, he began to feel short of breath, with a painful tightness in his chest. His kicks began to grow weak and he felt hot and flushed in spite of the 53-degree water. Finally, his body went limp as he lapsed into unconsciousness.

(DIVE ACCIDENTS, CLOSE CALLS
& HOW YOU CAN AVOID THEM)

Cayman, Where Dream Vacations Come to Life

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LESSONS FOR LIFE

THE DIVER

Sam was in his late thirties and at least 50 pounds overweight. Despite his poor physical conditioning, he was an advanced open-water diver with a few hundred logged dives, and he made frequent dives to keep his water skills current. When Sam decided to pursue technical dive training, medical professionals cautioned him that his weight posed serious risks, but Sam ignored the warnings and adamantly pursued trimix certification.

THE DIVE

On previous attempts to complete the trimix course, Sam failed due to physical fatigue and discomfort with the bulky gear configuration required for the dive. Determined to complete the class, he traveled to a nearby seaport for another try. The dive was to take place on a popular technical diving site where depths exceed 200 feet in the cold flow of the Labrador current.

When the captain dropped anchor on the site, he noted the swift surface current. Following their usual procedures, the boat crew deployed a tag line behind the boat and a safety line leading from the transom to the anchor line at a depth of 15 feet. The divemaster then gave a detailed briefing, including the proper methods for reaching the anchor line in the current.

The divers began suiting up. Sam wore twin back-mounted cylinders containing a trimix blend with 18 percent oxygen and two 46-cubic-foot stage cylinders—one containing 100 percent oxygen for decompression stops and the other containing nitrox with 32 percent oxygen as a travel gas. As Sam tried to put on his fins while wearing his twin cylinders, a crewmember noted

that he was sweating profusely and pulled Sam's dry suit hood back to dump cool water over his head. Several times, the crew and other divers encouraged Sam to slow down and relax. Sam kept insisting that he would be fine once he got in the water, and continued to strap on the rest of his equipment. Still breathing hard, he hurriedly stepped off the stern to join his instructor who was floating at the surface on the tag line.

THE ACCIDENT

Even though Sam carried nitrox to use as a travel gas for use in shallow water, his girth made it difficult to secure the nitrox regulator and retuck the hose when it was time to switch to his primary cylinders. Instead, he decided to enter the water breathing from his trimix supply. Even though it can be relatively safe to breathe this gas for a short period of time on the surface, the lower oxygen content didn't help Sam catch his breath. The instructor asked Sam if he was sure he was OK to continue, and Sam insisted he would be fine once they got under water.

The dive plan called for Sam and the instructor to descend to the safety line at 15 feet and pull themselves hand-over-hand to the anchor line. The instructor gave the signal and started his descent, but when Sam tried to follow, he failed to deflate his BC fully and found himself buoyed on the surface by excess air in his dry suit.

Sam struggled to kick his overweight body, his dry suit, four scuba tanks and the rest of his technical gear forward against the current. Witnesses said he made little progress and continued to struggle for more than a minute before going "limp in the water." An alert mate quickly jumped in, grabbing Sam's

body just before the current carried it past the end of the tag line. With assistance from the boat, he hauled Sam back on board.

The instructor, who had been waiting at the anchor line, surfaced to find the crew administering mouth-to-mouth resuscitation and oxygen to Sam. They were unable to revive him.

ANALYSIS

The autopsy showed that Sam died from a massive heart attack. Although he had medical clearance for the class, he had been to several physicians before he found one willing to sign the medical releases. We will never know for sure, but it's likely that breathing a hypoxic gas under heavy exertion aggravated underlying heart problems. Ultimately, Sam's poor physical condition is probably to blame for his death.

SD

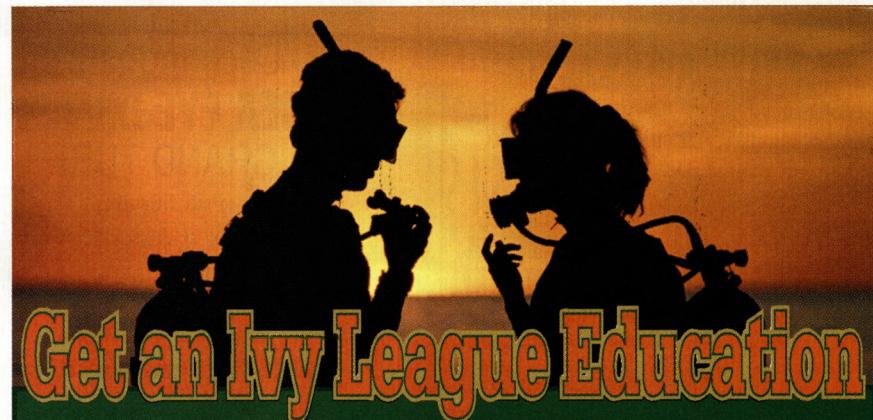
LESSONS FOR LIFE

1 MAINTAIN a healthy weight and proper physical conditioning for diving. If you feel ill or even uncomfortable during a pre-dive setup, abort the dive.

2 HYPOXIC TRIMIX blends are used to avoid oxygen toxicity at great depths. These gases should not be used at the surface.

3 NEVER STRUGGLE against strong currents. Had Sam followed the briefing, he would have used the safety line to reach the anchor line without overexertion.

4 INSTRUCTORS SHOULDN'T blindly rely on a physician's medical clearance. Not all physicians understand the physical stresses of diving. It's the instructor's responsibility to exclude from training students who are obviously physically incapable of completing the course.



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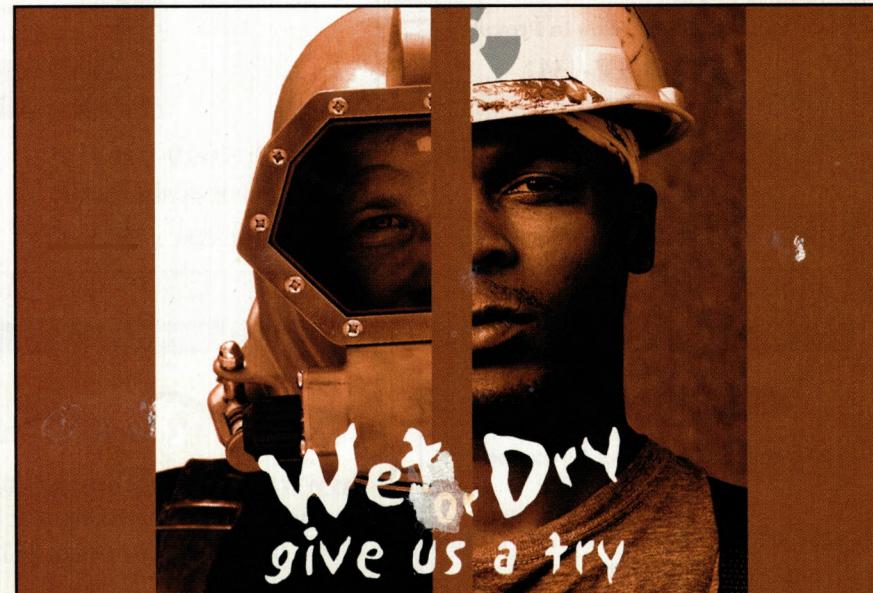
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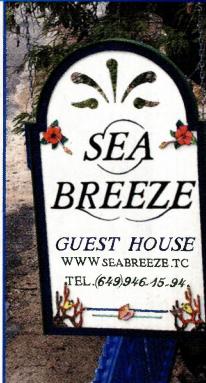
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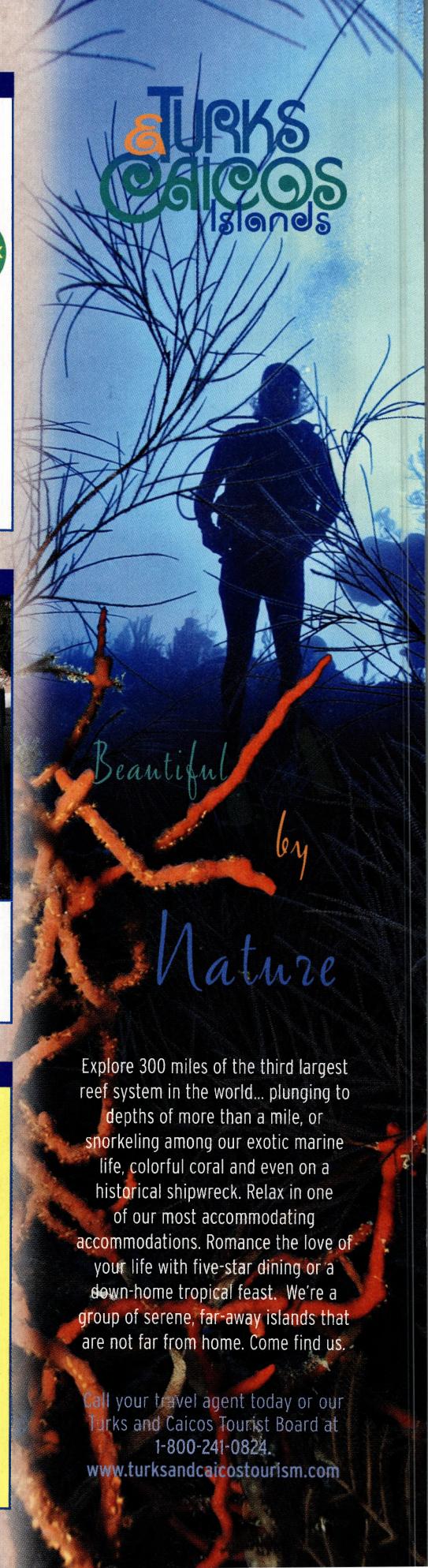
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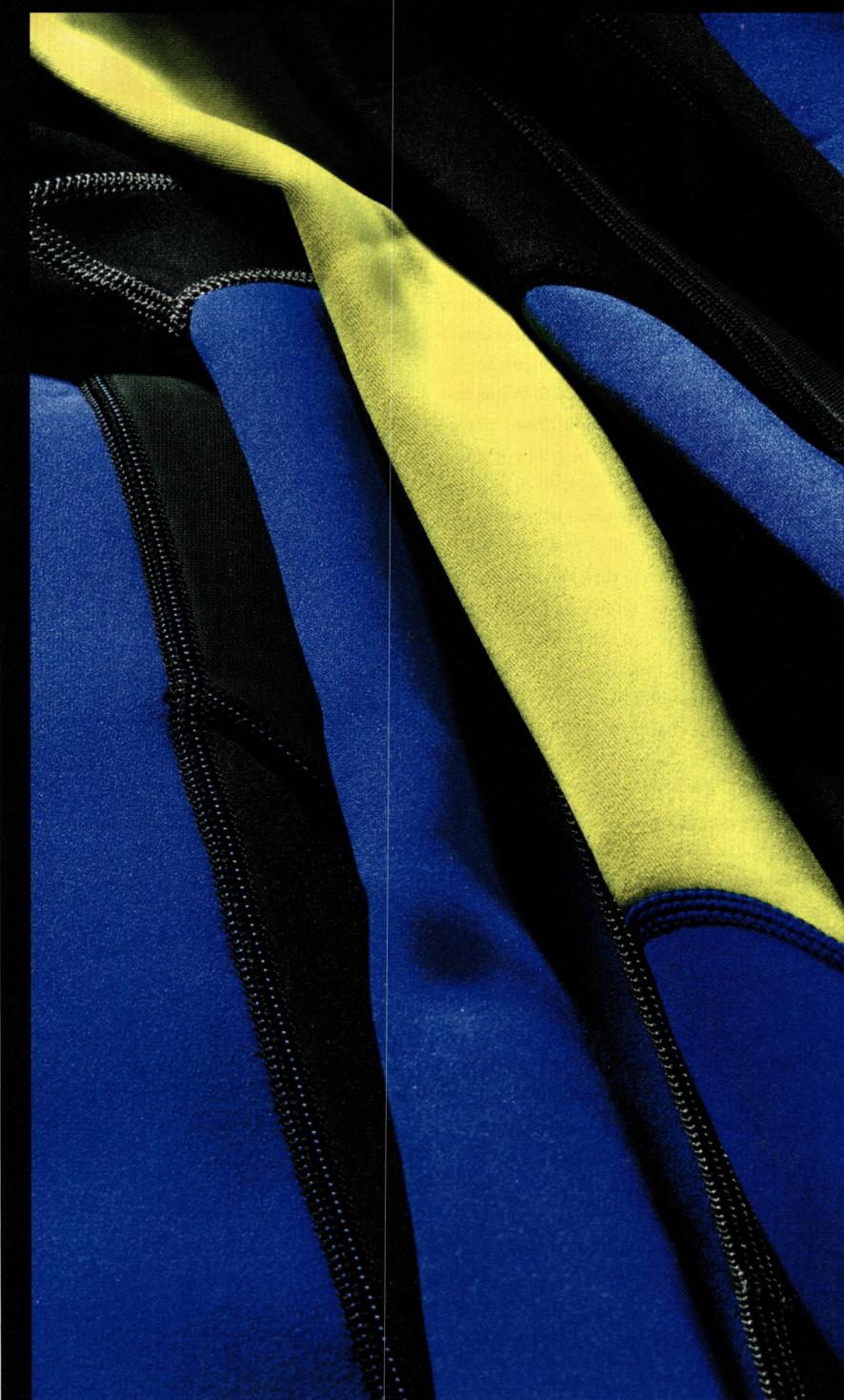
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SCUBA LAB REVIEW

Tropical Weight Wetsuits

Neoprene skinsuits for when it's just too toasty for 3mm. BY

JOHN BRUMM

JUDGING from what you see on dive boats from the Caribbean to the Hawaiian Islands, the 3mm neoprene jumpsuit is the wetsuit of choice among most warm-water divers. But there are times in the tropics, especially in those dog days of deep summer, when three millimeters of neoprene is simply too much of a good thing.

So what do you do? Go bareback? Not in waters teeming with stinging critters and snaggy reefs. And don't forget, even water that's bathtub-warm will eventually suck the heat from your body without some sort of thermal protection.

The answer, then, is to keep wearing rubber, just dial it down to 2mm, 1mm and even less, with a tropical skinsuit. These super-thin neoprene wetsuits are high-stretch, body-hugging and extremely versatile. They can be worn as stand-alone suits in the tropics or under a more traditional suit for an additional layer of warmth.

The suits are available in both full-cut and shorty styles. Shorties feel great in the water, are easy to get in and out of, and provide incredible range of motion, but they do leave your lower legs, arms and some-

times your shoulders exposed to the elements. Full suits, on the other hand, are more restrictive (although compared to a 5mm suit it's still like diving naked), but offer full-body thermal and abrasion protection.

THE SEARCH FOR THE PERFECT SUIT

► **KEEP IT SNUG.** Regardless what style you choose, the most important goal is to get a snug fit. This isn't always easy. Every body has a different shape, and each manufacturer tends to have its own perception of Small, Medium and Large. We discovered that a single diver



could fit perfectly into a Medium-Large from one manufacturer, but needed an Extra-Large from another manufacturer to achieve the same fit. Also, some suits seem to be designed for muscular divers, while others fit lean divers better. One maker's design might be cut tight in the crotch or pinch the armpits or have arms and legs that are overly long, but another manufacturer's model will fit like you had been measured for it. Try on as many suits as you can until you find the perfect fit.

► **CONSIDER MATERIALS.** All these suits are made of nylon-covered neoprene foam, but two models have opted for skin-out neoprene patches on the chest and back (A). Skin-out neoprene repels water faster so there's less evaporative cooling on the important core area.

► **THE SECRET'S IN THE SEALS.** Water flowing over bare skin is usually a diver's primary source of heat loss. And the biggest entry point for unwanted water is the neck, since all collars have a tendency to scoop water as you swim forward. An adjustable collar that lies flat and smooth, preferably with a slick, skin-in (sometimes called Glideskin) type surface that seals against your skin, is what you're shooting for (B). Wrist and ankle seals also help reduce water flow. Skin-in gasket styles are the most efficient, although rolled-nylon ankle and wrist cuffs can also be effective (C).

► **FRONT ZIP OR BACK ZIP?** Front-zip suits are easier to climb into, but can be harder to peel out of. Back-zip suits usually provide a better collar seal, but while wearing back-zip suits, it's harder to bend over. Regardless of style, the zipper is potentially a large entry point for water. So a shorter zipper is better—as long as it's not so short that it makes getting into or out of the suit difficult. There should be an under-flap behind the zipper to keep the zipper itself off your skin and help keep water out. Some suits also have an over-flap that conceals the zipper (D). This helps keep out both sand and water, although keeping the zipper exposed lets the slider move more freely.

► **IN STITCHES.** Flatlock stitching (sometimes called flatseam stitching) is a standard pattern that offers strength and flexibility and tends to be more comfortable than more con-



ventional overlock stitches. One suit is sewn with what is called cup-stitching. According to the maker, this is a stronger, tighter seam that reduces the amount of water that flows through it. We also found that this seam creates virtually no ridge on the inside of the suit, which is a big plus in comfort and reduces those funky skin indentations you tend to get after a day of diving.

► **BELLS AND WHISTLES.** Key pockets (E) and kneepads, thumb loops and foot stirrups (F), shoulder nonskid and zipper locks (G), all contribute to a more functional suit. You don't really need them, but they can make life easier.

THE DETAILS

ALL SUITS HAVE UNDER-ZIPPER FLAPS to keep the metal teeth off the skin, zipper locks, rolled-edge ankles and wrists, adjustable collars and embossed kneepads, except where noted.



1 Action Plus Bahia 1mm Jumpsuit

PRICE: \$98. **STYLE:** Front zip. **SIZES:** 6 Unisex. **WARRANTY:** 2 years. **MADE IN:** Taiwan. **>** Flatlock-stitched. A diagonal front zipper makes it easy to put on and take off, but the gap where the zipper tops out is susceptible to water seepage. Comes with a key pouch. Nice rubber kneepads. No zipper lock.

2 Akona AKMS054 1mm Full Suit

PRICE: \$90. **STYLE:** Back zip. **SIZES:** 9 men's, 6 women's. **WARRANTY:** 2 years. **MADE IN:** Taiwan. **>** New for 2004, this flexible full-body suit is flatlock-stitched and uses Glideskin lining around the neck for a better seal. A reinforced thumb tab at the base of the zipper makes suiting up much easier.

3 Bare .5mm Thermalskin Full Suit

PRICE: \$109.95. **STYLE:** Back zip. **SIZES:** 6 men's, 6 women's. **WARRANTY:** Limited life-

time. **MADE IN:** Canada. **>** Flatseam-stitched with lots of stretch. Its Glideskin neck seal and zipper overlap minimize water intrusion. The reinforced thumb tab at the base of the zipper, plus Thermalskin, a slick interior lining, make self-donning easy. No zipper lock.

4 Henderson Microprene 1mm

PRICE: \$94.95. **STYLE:** Back zip. **SIZES:** 9 men's, 6 women's. **WARRANTY:** 1 year. **MADE IN:** Varies. **>** High-stretch, flatlock-stitched Microprene material provides an excellent fit. An outer zipper flap cuts down on water seepage. With wide foot stirrups, nylon kneepad, a skin-in neck seal and a key pocket, too.

5 Oceaner El Gecko Full Suit

PRICE: \$156. **STYLE:** Back zip. **SIZES:** 6 men's, 6 women's. **WARRANTY:** 2 years on workmanship, 1 year on materials. **MADE IN:** Canada. **>** Flatlock-stitched and nicely fin-

ished, the El Gecko has 3mm skin-out patches on the chest and back to increase warmth on what's basically a 2mm suit. There are high-stretch panels in the crotch and side areas, the zipper has a protective overlap, and ankle, wrist and neck have skin-in gasket-style seals. With nylon kneepads.

6 O'Neill 1mm 1000X Full Suit

PRICE: \$123.95. **STYLE:** Back zip. **SIZES:** 6 men's, 6 women's. **WARRANTY:** 1 year. **MADE IN:** Mexico. **>** Light and pliable for a great fit, this suit also features anatomically contoured side panels and flatlock-stitched seams. An overlap covers a smaller gauge zipper. The collar is nonadjustable. Comes with a key pocket.

7 Pinnacle Shadow 1mm Full Suit

PRICE: \$115. **STYLE:** Back zip. **SIZES:** 6 men's, 6 women's. **WARRANTY:** Limited lifetime. **MADE IN:** Thailand. **>** Lots of flatlock-

TROPICAL WETSUITS

G E A R



stitched neoprene panels and an open-cell neoprene lining create a comfortable suit. Smoothskin gasket-style seals on ankles and neck help keep water out. Nice kneepads. With a zipper overlap and key pocket.

8 SeaQuest .5mm Tropix **PRICE:** \$110. **STYLE:** Back zip. **SIZES:** 6 men's, 5 women's. **WARRANTY:** 1-year limited. **MADE IN:** Hong Kong. **>** Quick-dry 1mm skin-out back and chest provide additional warmth on the surface. A skin-in neck seal and zipper overlap reduce water flow. The suit is cup-stitched so you don't feel the indentations from seams. Lots of attention to detail, plus thumb loops and foot stirrups. Nicest full suit of the bunch.

9 XS Scuba 1mm Men's TI Full Suit **PRICE:** \$79.95. **STYLE:** Back zip. **SIZES:** 6 men's. **WARRANTY:** 2-year limited. **MADE IN:** Philippines. **>** Titanium-coated neoprene with a skin-in collar. The suit provides good range of motion and is easy

to put on and take off. Flatlock-stitched. Nylon reinforcement at the base of the zipper increases durability. Minimal knee protection.

THE SHORTIES

10 DeepSee 2mm Shorty **PRICE:** \$90. **STYLE:** Back zip. **SIZES:** 5 men's, 5 women's. **WARRANTY:** 1-year limited. **MADE IN:** Hong Kong. **>** A sharp shorty. Skin-in gasket-style seals at arms and legs. Skin-out neoprene chest for quick drying and warmth. Flatlock-stitched and an outer zipper flap. There's nonslip material on the shoulders so your BC won't slip. Oh so easy to get in and out of. Nicest shorty of the bunch.

11 Henderson 1mm Core Warmer **PRICE:** \$84.95. **STYLE:** No zip. **SIZES:** 7 men's, 6 women's. **WARRANTY:** 1 year. **MADE IN:** Varies. **>** The classic shorty. Comfortable and very lightweight. Simple Velcro shoulder entry eliminates the need for a zipper. The suit is sleeveless but

has enough shoulder coverage to support a BC. Nicely finished. Easy to get in and out of.

12 Oceanner Bermuda Shorty

PRICE: \$124. **STYLE:** Back zip. **SIZES:** 6 men's, 6 women's. **WARRANTY:** 2 years on workmanship, 1 year on materials. **MADE IN:** Canada. **>** Same features as Oceanner's El Gecko but in a shorty.

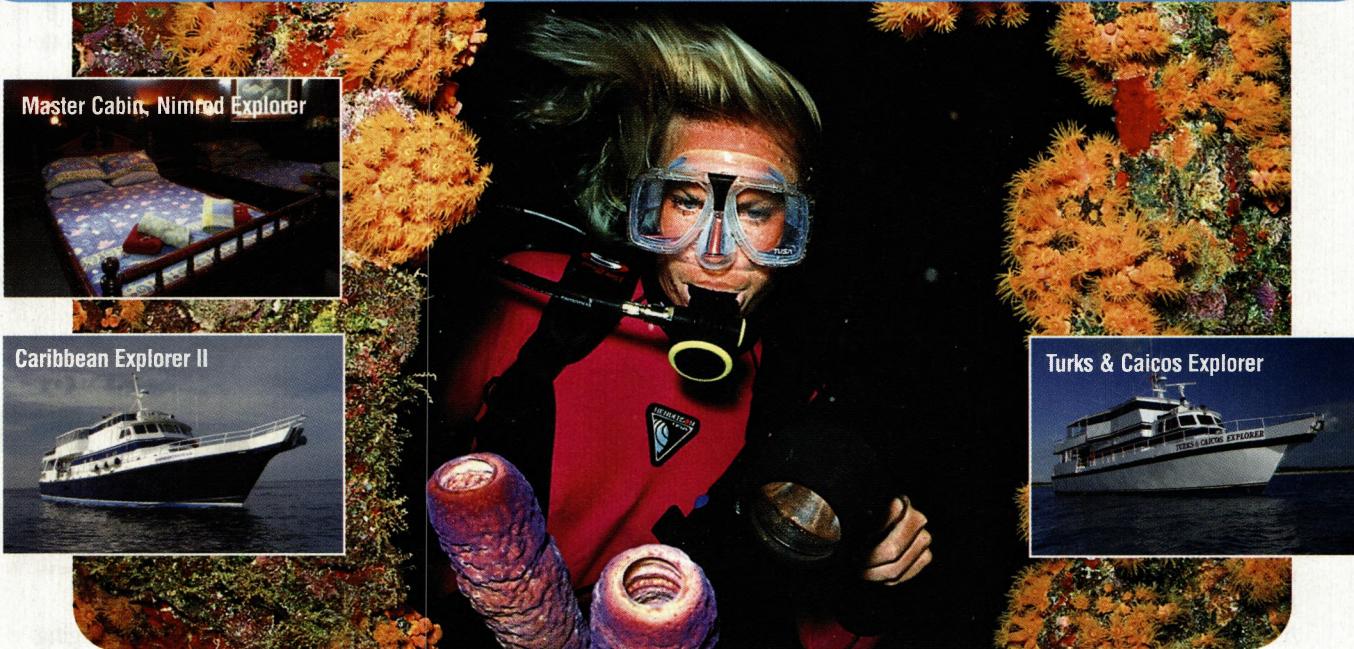
13 O'Neill .5mm Thinskins

PRICE: \$89.95. **STYLE:** No zip. **SIZES:** 6 men's. **WARRANTY:** 1 year. **MADE IN:** Mexico. **>** New for 2004. Unique no-zipper, no-Velcro side-entry design makes for a very comfortable neck seal unobstructed by a zipper. High-stretch, lightweight and extremely comfortable. Nicely finished. Flatlock-stitched with UV protection.

GET MORE **>** For manufacturer information on these wetsuits, turn to *In Depth*, page 97, section 6.

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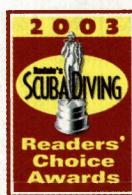
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200234301



Jamie Ireland is a freelance writer in the areas of sex, fitness, romance, and travel.

the inside story on

Hot Spot Great Sex!

by Jamie Ireland

Learning "The Ropes"...

This month I got a letter from a reader in Texas about a "little secret" that has made her sex life with her husband absolutely explosive. (Those Texans know their stuff, let me tell you.)

Tina writes:

Dear Jamie,

Last month my husband returned from a business trip in Europe, and he was hotter and hornier than ever before, with more passion than he has had for years. It was incredible. He flat wore me out! And the best part of all—he was having multiple orgasms. I know what you're thinking... men don't have multiples, but trust me he was, and his newfound pow! pow! power! stimulated me into the most intense orgasms I've ever had. So, before we knew it, we were both basking in the glow of the best sex of our lives!

We tried tantric stuff in the past, and the results were so-so. But this was something new and exciting, completely out of the ordinary. I asked my husband what had created such a dramatic change in our lovemaking and he told me he'd finally learned "the ropes."

On the last night of his business trip my husband spent an evening dining out with a Swedish nutritionist and his wife of 20 years. The couple was obviously still quite enamored with each other, so my husband asked their secret. The nutritionist told him their sex life was more passionate than ever. Then he pulled



a small bottle from his satchel and gave it to my husband. The bottle contained a natural supplement that the nutritionist told my husband would teach him "the ropes" of good sex.

My husband takes the supplement every day. The supply from the nutritionist is about to run out and we desperately want to know how we can find more. Do you know anything about "the ropes," and can you tell us how we can find it in the States?

Sincerely,
Tina C., Ft. Worth, Texas

Tina, you and the rest of our readers are in luck, because it just so happens I do know about "the ropes" and the supplement your husband's Swedish friend likely shared.

The physical contractions and fluid release during male orgasm can be multiplied and intensified by a product called Ogöplex Pure Extract™. It's a daily supplement specially formulated to trigger better orgasmic experiences in men. The best part, from a woman's perspective, is that the motion and experience a man can achieve with

Ogöplex Pure Extract can help stimulate our own orgasms, bringing a whole new meaning to the term simultaneous climax!

The term used by the Swedish nutritionist is actually fairly common slang for the effect your husband experienced. The enhanced contractions and heightened orgasmic release are often referred to as ropes because of the rope-like effect of release during climax. In other words, as some people have said, "it just keeps coming and coming and coming."

As far as finding it in the States, I know of just one importer—Böland Naturals. If you are interested, you can contact them at 1-866-276-1232 or ogoplex.com. Ogöplex is all-natural and safe to take. All the people I've spoken with have said taking the once-daily tablet has led to the roping effect Tina described in her letter.

Aren't you glad you asked?

Jamie Ireland
Jamie Ireland



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YOUR BODY

The Diver's Mouth

How to beat jaw pain and make sure your teeth don't explode under water. **BY SELENE YEAGER**

HERE'S A STAT TO CHEW ON: Approximately half of the U.S. population doesn't see a dentist at least once a year as recommended by the American Dental Association. Though diving and dentistry seem about as closely related as butterflyfish and bicycles, your oral health can be a surprisingly

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YOUR BODY

important factor as you sink your teeth (quite literally) into diving.

"Your teeth and mouth are very involved in scuba diving," says diving dentist Eric Curtis, D.D.S., of Safford, Ariz., and spokesperson for the Academy of General Dentistry (AGD). "If either is in poor health or is not treated properly, you can find yourself with jaw joint pain, gum tissue problems, or 'tooth squeeze'—pain in the center of the tooth caused by changing pressures," he says. This cluster of problems, known as "diver's mouth syndrome," is fairly common, though not often reported because the symptoms, like headache and face pain, masquerade as other conditions. Here's what you need to know.

One Size Fits None
AS YOUR GATEWAY TO AIR, your mouthpiece is an essential piece of gear. "Yet when it comes to fit, it's

one size fits nobody," says Curtis. Basic mouthpiece design has not changed since it was introduced in the 1940s, and it continues to cause the same problems for generations of divers. "Standard rubber mouthpieces are usually too small for most divers," says Curtis. Also the mouthpiece grip, which requires you to bite on the blocks with your foremost teeth, causes jaw joint stress and inflammation in about two-thirds of divers, according to surveys. Add the stress of dragging a bulky regulator through the water by your teeth, and you have a recipe for a bout of temporomandibular joint syndrome (TMJ)—a condition marked by headache, pain in the face or jaw, difficulty chewing and ringing in the ears.

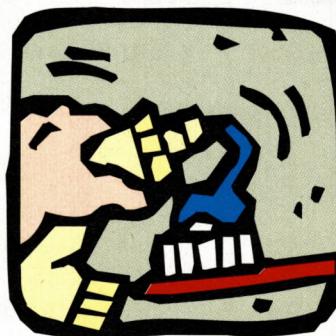
"If you're already prone to TMJ, this is especially problematic," says Curtis. But even if you're not, the excitement of scuba diving can

SMILE AND SAY, "SCUBA!"

FOLLOWING THE BASIC DENTAL CARE you learned as a kid can help keep your teeth in top diving shape. Floss once and brush twice daily, and see your dentist at least once a year, preferably close to diving trips, for a professional cleaning and checkup. Since many dives take place miles, if not days, away from quality dental care, it's also good medicine to be equipped for dental emergencies, especially if you have a mouthful of fillings, crowns and bridges just waiting to cut loose in a remote locale.

"You can buy portable, cheap, but very effective dental emergency kits like Dentemp O.S. (\$4; www.majestic-drug.com) at most pharmacies or grocery stores," says Academy of General Dentistry president-elect Thomas A. Howley, D.D.S. These kits let you repair loose caps or lost fillings with a strong dentist-quality cement that'll hold until you can see your dentist.

"My rule of thumb is that if you pack emergency supplies, you'll never need them—so if you're prone to problems, bring it along," says Howley.





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make normally slack-jawed people clench like a terrier playing tug. Aside from making a conscious effort to loosen your grip, you can make your mouth more comfortable by customizing your mouthpiece as much as possible. In a small study of healthy men ages 25 to 35, researchers tested the comfort of three different types of mouthpiece—standard, semi-custom sili-

In a study, researchers tested the comfort of three different types of mouthpiece. The standard scuba mouthpiece required twice as much effort to hold in place as a fully customized model and caused twice as much jaw pain.

cone and a fully customized molded model—during dives of 45 minutes in duration. The standard mouthpiece required twice as much effort to hold in place as the fully customized model and caused lip numbness as well as twice as much jaw and head pain. "Poorly fitting mouthpieces can also cut your gums," says Curtis.

"For frequent divers, customization is the way to go," says Curtis. "Or if you already own your own regulator and are having problems, contour it to better fit your mouth." If you're just renting for the day, experiment with a few mouthpieces before the actual dive to find the one that is most comfortable.

If despite your best efforts you emerge from a dive with TMJ symptoms, moist heat is the treatment of choice, says Curtis. "Take



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some ibuprofen and apply a moist, comfortably hot washcloth or get in the jacuzzi." Like other joint pain, the symptoms should subside with a little rest and basic care. If they linger, talk to your dentist when you get home.

The Big Squeeze

ANY PLACE AIR BUBBLES can be trapped and expand is a potential point of pain for divers. Cracks, crevices and holes in teeth, though not terribly common, can pave the way for a nasty case of barodontalgia—otherwise known as "tooth squeeze"—or, in rare cases, exploding teeth.

Anything that allows a little bit of air to be caught—a cavity, unfinished root canal, defective edge on a crown or filling, abscess or gum disease—can trap a bubble, which expands and causes

intense pain upon ascent," says Curtis. Symptoms include toothache, bleeding, or a cracked or broken tooth. "Though I've never seen one personally, there

Cracks, crevices and holes in teeth can pave the way for tooth squeeze or, in rare cases, exploding teeth.

have been cases of teeth exploding when a diver ascends," says Curtis. "More commonly, divers will just have pain, or in worse cases, a break or chip."

You can take the edge off with an over-the-counter pain reliever like Tylenol or Advil. But preventive care is better, says scuba enthusiast Thomas A.

Howley, D.D.S., of Perkiomenville, Pa., president-elect of the AGD. "Make sure you're in good dental health before your dive trip," he says. Though you don't need to see a dentist who knows the sport, it's a good idea to mention that you'll be diving, so the dentist can pay special attention to fillings, crowns and other potential problem areas. "Obviously, if you are in the middle of a procedure like a root canal or crown, get it finished before you dive," adds Curtis. If possible, don't dive for at least 24 hours after treatment to minimize your risk of tooth squeeze.

Caution: Choking Hazard

THE JURY IS OUT regarding the risks of diving with dentures or partial

Continued on page 88

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HYPERTHYROIDISM

Q: I have hyperthyroidism. Is this a contraindication for diving?

A: It may not be in a person's best interests to scuba dive with untreated symptomatic hyperthyroidism (i.e., having an overactive thyroid gland). The thyroid is a vital gland that secretes the hormone thyroxine, which helps regulate body metabolism. In excess quantities, this hormone can increase the heart rate or produce cardiac problems, affect respiratory rate, decrease body weight and even interact with the central nervous system. Symptoms of hyperthyroidism can also include discomfort and anxiety.

Cardiac effects of hyperthyroidism include tachycardia (rapid heartbeat), serious dysrhythmias and heart failure. Hyperthyroidism can also cause muscular weakness and periodic paralysis.

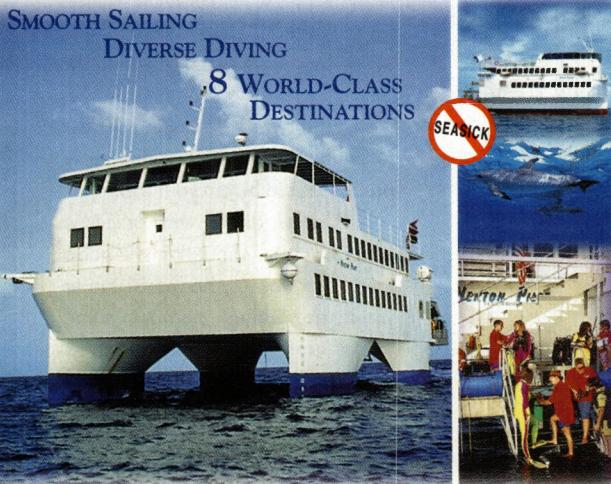
The output of the thyroid gland can be controlled by medication, radiation, radioactive iodine or surgery. These procedures reduce the function of the thyroid and the amount of hormone released. Once the hormone level has been reduced to within the normal range (as assessed by blood tests), and the signs and symptoms of hyperthyroidism have resolved, a diver with a thyroid condition may resume diving, as long as he has no other major health problems and is physically fit.

Individuals who are treated for hyperthyroidism may in turn become hypothyroid (have reduced thyroid function) and may require supplemental thyroxine to raise their hormone levels back into the normal range. It is vital for all individuals with thyroid ailments to have their thyroid function measured regularly by blood tests. This can help diagnose hypo- and hyperthyroidism and can indicate the efficacy of treatment.

Participation in recreational scuba diving is usually considered safe for individuals with hyperthyroidism when they show no signs of the ailment and have normal thyroxine levels.

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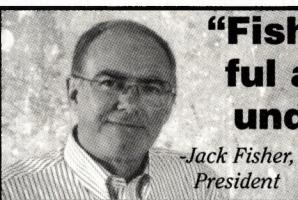
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YOUR BODY

Continued from page 86

dentures. Some dentists say it's perfectly safe, so long as you are careful. Others caution that in the excitement of the dive, it's easy to inadvertently suck them in and either swallow or start choking on them—not particularly desirable when you're 30 feet down.

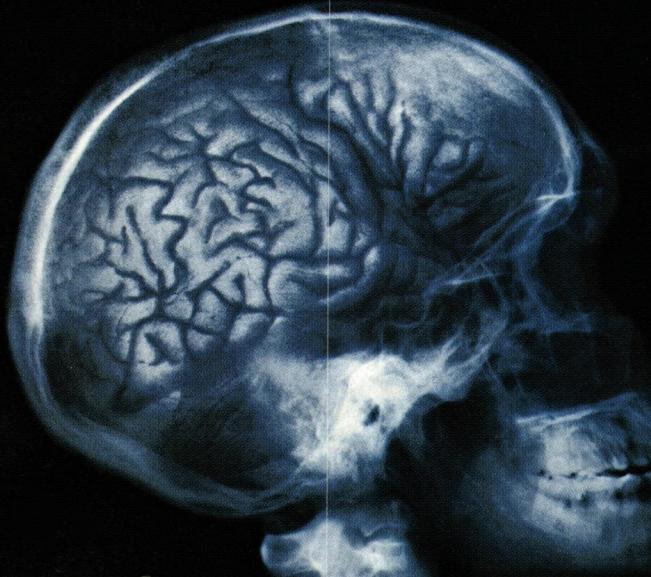
"If you're a regular diver and you're comfortable with your equipment, you're probably fine," says Howley. "But if you have a very small partial that could easily be swallowed, it's a good idea to remove it before diving." Otherwise, follow the same advice as people

Some dentists say diving with dentures is perfectly safe. Others caution that in the excitement of a dive, it's easy to inadvertently suck them in and either swallow or choke on them.

with natural teeth—see your dentist to double-check that everything is properly fitted before your trip.

Likewise, diving with braces is generally safe, though it's a good idea to let your orthodontist know you'll be diving, because some braces are equipped with springs and wires that may come detached and could present a choking hazard. Also, biting down on a regulator mouthpiece for 30 or 45 minutes can place a little additional stress on teeth that are still being aligned, so a diver wearing braces can expect that his mouth may be a little more tender or sore than usual.

SD



Now That's Using Your Head

Dive better and safer by taking care of your noggin. **BY JOHN FRANCIS**

THE CONTROL center for every dive is located directly above your neck. Here's how to keep all the parts in working order.

(E A R S)

Equalizing Made Easy

W H A T T O D O I F the old "pinch your nose and blow gently" isn't getting the job done? Start sooner. "By the time you feel pressure in your ear it's almost too late," says Ned Branch, a PADI instructor. "You need to start equalizing before you feel the need for it."

Remember that equalizing is a matter of opening your Eustachian tubes, those hair-like pathways that run between your middle ear spaces and throat. The tubes have one-way valves at their entrance, and blowing very slightly against pinched nostrils or moving the right throat muscles will open them. But if you wait until the pressure on the

tubes is too great, they clamp shut, making it impossible to equalize.

Here's how to make equalizing easier. First, check that your Eustachian tubes can open before you even get in the water. All you have to do is swallow. If you hear a "click" or "pop" in each ear, you know you'll be able to equalize, because that pop is a puff of air that's been forced by your tongue up a Eustachian tube and is hitting an eardrum. No "pop" means the tube is blocked.

Next, equalize repeatedly in the hours before you get in the water, by swallowing while pinching your nose. Blow gently if you need to, but don't brutalize those tiny tubes, as that can cause mucus to secrete and block them.

In the water, the last thing to do before leaving the surface is to "prepressurize" your ears with a gentle pinch-and-swallow or pinch-and-blow. That gets you a little ahead of the game, and

you need that head start because the pressure on your ears builds fastest in the first few feet of descent. Try to equalize at two feet and again at four feet down. If you're not equalized at six feet down, you may not be able to equalize at all.

Equalizing is also easier when you descend feetfirst, as rising air in your Eustachian tubes automatically moves toward your ears, not away from them. And if you look up toward the surface, you'll stretch your neck and help open the tubes.

Swimmer's Ear

G O T A N I T C H inside your ear? It's otitis externa, or "swimmer's ear," an infection of the outer ear canal caused because constant immersion washed away the waxy film that normally protects it. Now the skin stays wet and starts growing bacteria. After itching comes redness and pain. There are both prescription and over-the-counter eardrops to prevent and treat it, by drying the skin and killing the bacteria. Divers Alert Network reports divers have had luck with a home brew: a 50/50 mix of white wine vinegar and isopropyl alcohol. Tilt your head, fill one ear, and hold it there for five minutes, then do the other ear. If this doesn't work, or if pain spreads to your jaw and cheek, see a doctor.

(S I N U S E S)

Diving with a Cold

Y O U ' V E G O T T H E S N I F F L E S but you didn't fly to Cozumel just for the nightlife. Can you dive? First question, can you equalize your ears? Often, a cold means mucus that blocks your Eustachian tubes. Obviously, if you can't equalize, you can't dive.

And are your sinuses blocked? They're the same problem: Sinuses are air spaces in your skull connected to the outside world by passages that can become blocked. A sinus "squeeze," on

descent or ascent, can be painful. You'll feel it behind your eyes or just above them, or just above your incisors.

Second, what medication are you taking for the cold? All of them have side effects that hit some of us harder than others. Antihistamines can make you drowsy while decongestants like pseudoephedrine can cause excitability, restlessness and dizziness. These effects can be magnified by pressure at depth.

There's another problem with decongestants. When they wear off they often have a rebound effect and cause more congestion than before you took them. This could cause a "reverse squeeze" if it wears off as you begin your ascent. Use a decongestant that works for 12 hours to be sure it won't wear off when you make a second or third dive later in the day.

Remember this advice when diving with a cold: (1) be sure you can equalize your ears; (2) minimize your medications and take only those meds that you know you don't have an unusual reaction to; (3) keep your dives a bit shallower and shorter; and (4) descend and ascend slowly to make equalizing as gradual as you can.

(EYES)

Vision Correction

NEARSIGHTED? Farsighted? Most two-window and four-window masks can be fitted with corrective lenses, either from the manufacturer (usually in 1 diopter increments) or can be custom-made to your prescription. (SeaVision USA, www.seavisionusa.com, is one source. The company even makes bifocal lenses.) By the way, you don't want the same prescription as your glasses for land, because the water itself acts as another lens. Choose lenses 10 percent stronger if you're nearsighted, 10 percent weaker if you're farsighted.

You can also get color correction. Water filters out much of the red, orange and yellow frequencies, so a lens which filters out some green and blue (it will look pinkish-red) will restore the correct color balance. Color correction is not as important for your eye as it is for your camera, however, because your brain will go pretty far to restore the correct color balance and boost the red and orange frequencies without the help of a colored lens.

Can you dive safely with contact

lenses? Lasik? You can dive with either. Be extra careful about contaminating your soft contact lenses, as seawater under the microscope looks like something out of a bio-warfare lab. After Lasik surgery heals, pressure (from depth) is no problem. However, the older radial keratotomy (RK) surgery, still used for some conditions, weakens the cornea, and there is at least a theoretical risk it could collapse if you have a serious mask squeeze.

(COMMAND & CONTROL)

Nitrogen Narcosis

THOUGH COUSTEAU called it "rapture of the deep," probably no one has tried to kiss a fish because of nitrogen narcosis. Forgetfulness and confusion are more typical signs, with some silliness or anxiety, depending on your mood. It is caused by breathing any inert gas under pressure, though some gases are more narcotic than others. Helium is less narcotic than nitrogen, and xenon is so narcotic, even at the surface, that it's used as a surgical anesthetic.

No one knows exactly how narcosis (or anesthesia, for that matter) actually

WHEN DIVING GIVES YOU A HEADACHE

An occasional headache is probably meaningless, but what if you almost always surface with pain? There can be lots of reasons.

A DULL, NONTROBBING ACHE in the back of your head is often a neck problem caused, for example, by a tank mounted so high on your BC that you have to bend your neck an odd way to keep from hitting the valve with your head. Sharp pains above, below and behind your eyes are likely a sinus squeeze, maybe a side effect of a cold. Failing to equalize your mask can cause a headache, as well as the bloodshot eyes and bleeding nose that so alarm your dive buddy. Cinching the mask strap too tightly can also cause a headache.

Cold water can also be the culprit in causing your headache. Your head chills more easily than the rest of your body because there's so much blood flow just under your scalp and so little fat protecting it.

Caffeine and tobacco can cause headaches under water, even when they don't on the surface. It's possible that pressure at depth magnifies their effects, as it does for many drugs. Dehydration is another cause of a headache.

A more serious cause of headache is carbon dioxide retention. Maybe you had to fin very hard so your breathing became short and rapid. Those short, rapid breaths mostly recycle "dead" air and don't wash out CO₂. When you're working hard, it's important to force yourself to take deep breaths.

works, but it apparently interferes with the chemical-electrical signals passing between nerve cells in your brain. Anesthesia, in fact, is probably the best description of what nitrogen narcosis is doing to you: silliness, forgetfulness and confusion are normal way stations before anesthetic unconsciousness. Not the best state of mind for diving. Narcosis is entirely dependent on depth, though each diver may have a different narcotic threshold, and various drugs can inhibit or promote it.

You can't really prevent nitrogen narcosis other than by staying shallow. You can make it go away pretty quickly just by ascending, sometimes only 10 feet or so.

What's the depth where narcosis is likely to be noticeable? About 100 feet, though tests show some divers to be slightly narced at only 30 feet.

Underwater Panic

THOUGH PANIC may be the single greatest danger to divers, it is relatively easy to avoid. A panic attack almost never arrives full-blown and unannounced. Panic is usually caused by having to deal with a sequence of individually small problems, each of which leaves a residue of stress behind to accumulate. At some point the accumulation reaches the breaking point.

For divers, the stress-building usually starts before you get wet. For example, on the way to the dive site, you hit a traffic jam, then find the parking lot is full and discover you've forgotten your after-dive jacket—and where's your C-card? Then in the rush to gear up, you make mistakes, jump in, find the water is freezing and the vis is lousy. Next, your tank valve gets caught in kelp and

your mask floods. If you begin to feel overwhelmed and panicky, the mask flood wasn't the cause, and neither was the kelp nor the traffic jam. All those stresses together caused your panic. To prevent panic, you should anticipate and avoid the accumulation of stress-causing problems.

The pre-dive stresses are easiest to avoid. For example, don't start the dive day tired, late and poorly organized.

Once in the water, the best stress avoiders are to breathe deeply and swim slowly. Pay careful attention to your buoyancy control because if you can remain stationary and you can breathe, you can take more time to deal with, say, a flooded mask. And when in doubt, stop. Take a deep breath. Calmly think the situation through. And then, and only then, act. SD

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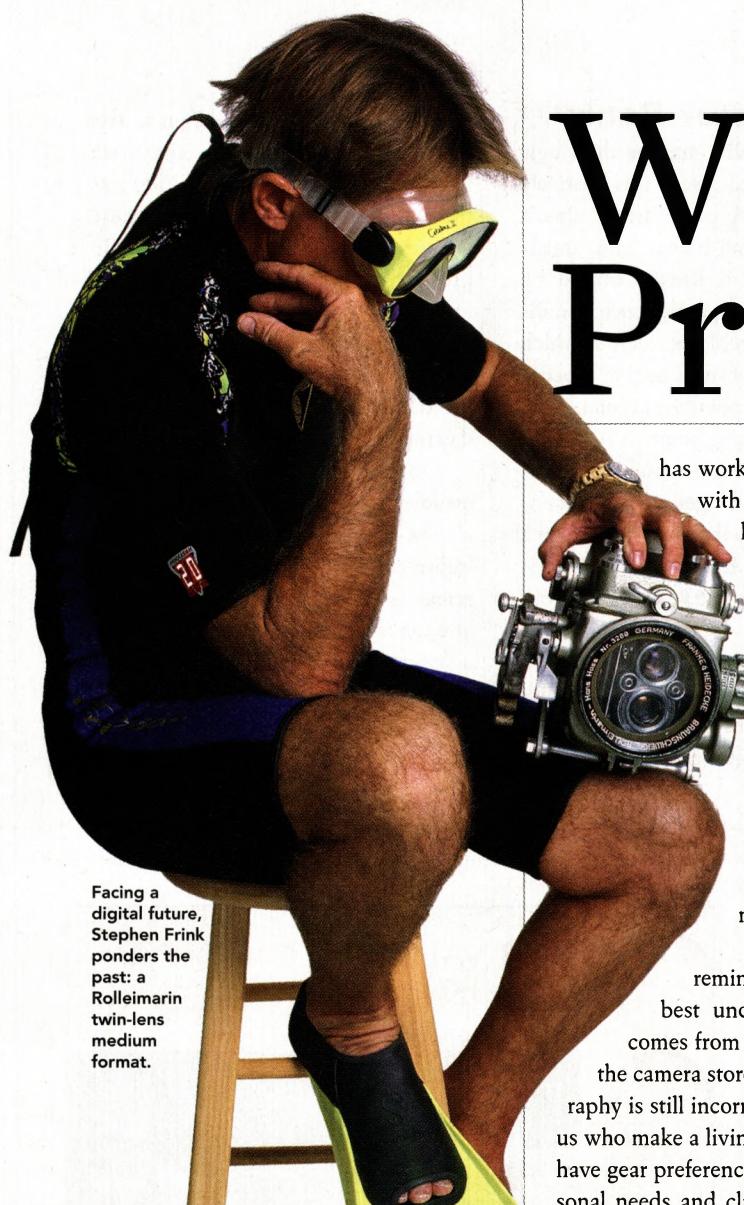
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Facing a digital future, Stephen Frink ponders the past: a Rolleimarin twin-lens medium format.

Want to take underwater photos like the professionals? Start by comparing your gear to theirs. **BY STEPHEN FRINK**

PUT TWO professional photographers together in a room, and it's a safe bet that at some point the conversation will turn to camera equipment—which is exactly what happened with David Doubilet and me recently.

David, like many underwater photographers, is in the early stages of testing the digital waters and is carefully comparing what

What the Pros Shoot

has worked for him in the past with what the market will likely demand in the future. He recognizes that *National Geographic* has an open mind about digital imaging, and he now has housed a Nikon DiX for his field kit. But, David is not ready to abandon his tried-and-true film capture techniques either.

Our conversation reminded me that, while the best underwater photography comes from the eye and heart, not the camera store, underwater photography is still incorrigibly techy. Those of us who make a living in pursuit of images have gear preferences defined by our personal needs and client demands. Take a look at what some of the pros are shooting today and you might get ideas for some gear to add to your own camera bag.

Stephen Frink

MY PRIMARY TOOL these days is a Canon EOS-1Ds digital SLR in a Seacam housing. The 11-megapixel capture is impressive, and even superior to film in many ways, but I've not abandoned silver halide. I still love my Nikon F100 (Seacam housing), my RS with the 13mm lens, and my Nikons with the 15mm. The array of lenses for both film and digital range from

the superwide 180-degree fisheyes to the 100mm macro lens. I prefer Ikelite (Sub-strobe 200 and DS125) strobes, as well as Inon Z220s. However, if I had to take only one system on location, it would be my housed Canon digital, 17-40mm zoom lens, and my Ikelite 200. With this alone I could cover most any editorial assignment with topside, fish and underwater wide-angle.

David Doubilet

FOR HIS FORAY into digital imaging, David bought a Seacam housing for a Nikon DiX, which he will use in conjunction with his Nexus D100 housing. His trusty analog gear includes Nexus housings for both Nikon F4 and F100 housings, as well as a Nexus N90 dedicated specifically to polecam work. He uses an Aquatica F4 primarily for wide-angle and splits, and has an Aquatica F3 adapted to shoot panoramas with a Hasselblad XPan camera and either the 30mm or 45mm Zeiss lens. He also still carries a Nikons V with 15mm, because there are some subjects that no camera handles better, even today. His strobes are primarily Sea & Sea YS200 with EO connectors (so that one strobe can connect/disconnect under water and serve several systems), but he also travels with Sea & Sea YS120, YS90 and YS30 strobes, and even a few older Sonic Research SR2000 units specifically for macro.

Doug Perrine

DOUG CONVERTED early to digital, and now shoots primarily with a pair of Canon EOS 10D cameras in UK-Germany hous-

ings. He uses the standard UK-Germany ports, except for the 9-inch mineral glass Seacam superdome that he has specially adapted to his housing. For lenses, he prefers the Canon 15mm, 16-35mm, 28-135mm, 50mm macro and 100mm macro, as well as the Sigma 14mm wide-angle. He uses Ikelite DS125 and Inon Z-220 strobes. A wide assortment of Ultralight and TLC arm and ball adapters handle the strobe placement tasks, and Doug notes that his Apple G4 Powerbook is an integral part of his location toolkit, as are the sturdy Pelican cases that get the gear there intact.

Eric Hanauer

ERIC IS NOW a digital convert as well, shooting two Nikon D100 bodies in Subal housings with flat ports for macro, and the 8-inch dome for most of the wide-angle work. His lenses for underwater work include the 12-24mm zoom lens, as well as the 16mm fisheye, 60mm and 105mm Micro-Nikkor lenses. His light kit includes three Ikelite DS125 strobes and Ultralight arms.

Michael Aw

A HYBRID SHOOTER, Michael takes both film and digital cameras on assignments. For film, he prefers Nikon F100 bodies in Seacam housings, as well as a Nikonos V for backup (primarily with 15mm lens).

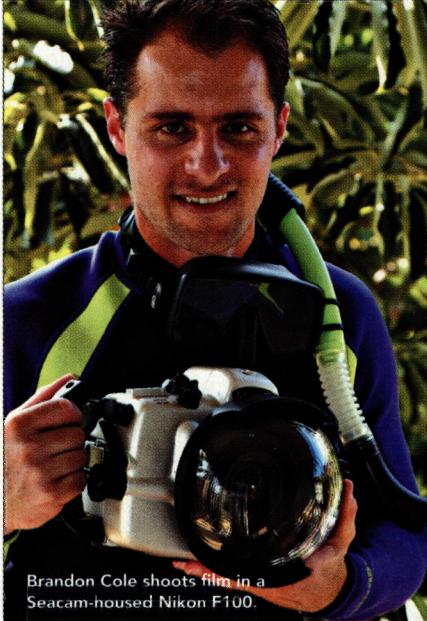
For digital, Michael shoots with a Nikon D1X in a Seacam housing. The same ports and viewfinders work on both housings, as do his various Nikkor lenses, including the 14mm, 16mm, 18mm, 24mm, 60mm macro, 12-24mm zoom, 28-70mm zoom and 105mm macro. For strobes, Michael uses Ikelite Substrobe 200s almost exclusively, although he also carries a housed SB28DX topside strobe so he can shoot TTL with his digital camera.

Claudia Pellarini

IN HER CAPACITY as photo pro at Stuart Cove's Dive Bahamas, Claudia uses only digital equipment. She now shoots a Nikon D100 in a Sea & Sea housing with 16mm, 12-24mm zoom and 105mm macro lenses. Because there is so much shark activity on any single dive, she also credits high-capacity (1GB and greater) media cards as integral to her professional shooting. She uses Sea & Sea YS350 strobes. Claudia says the Fin Photo gear locker is being upgraded with Canon Digital Rebel cameras, Sigma 14mm lenses and Aquatica housings. The choice of gear in this case is linked to capturing photos of divers and Caribbean reef sharks.

Berkley White

AS THE OWNER OF Backscatter Video and Photo in Monterey, Calif., Berkley has

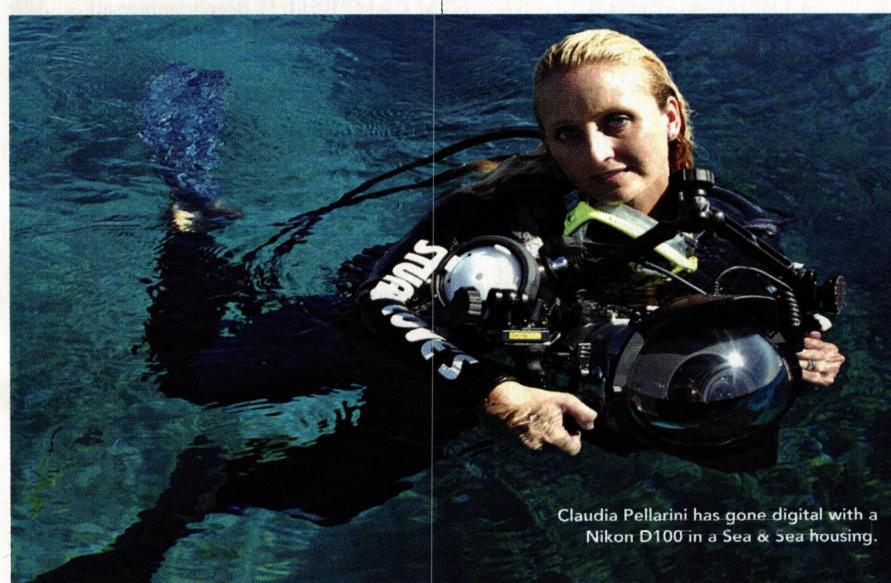


Brandon Cole shoots film in a Seacam-housed Nikon F100.

access to most lines of gear. His choice for shooting is the Light & Motion Titan housing for his Nikon D100 digital camera. As he already had various Sea & Sea ports, Berkley ordered his Titan housing with the S&S port adapter, allowing him to use his 10.5mm digital fisheye, 16mm, 12-24mm zoom, and 60mm and 105mm Micro-Nikkor lenses with this system. For ultra-macro, Berkley uses a MacroMate system, essentially an external wet diopter that slips over the flat port. This is a good solution when you want magnification greater than 1:1 for tiny critters like pygmy seahorses. His strobes are Sea & Sea YS120 strobes, a Light & Motion Mini-Mod for focus assist, and Ultralight arms. For digital work, his travel kit also includes an Apple G4 Titanium and a pair of Lacie 40GB Firewire portable hard drives.

Brandon Cole

CERTAIN THAT his photography will edge more toward digital in the very near future, Brandon is eager to buy one of the new Canon EOSiD MKII cameras for its 8-megapixel/8-frames-per-second capture rate. But for now, he is shooting film in a Nikon F100 (housed Seacam), as well as some older housed Canon SLR cameras. His digital rig is a Fuji S2 in a Sea & Sea housing, and because it will accept Nikon lenses, he is able to use his 14mm, 16mm, 17-



Claudia Pellarini has gone digital with a Nikon D100 in a Sea & Sea housing.

35mm, 12-24mm, 20mm, and 60mm and 105mm Micro-Nikkors for both film and digital. The Canon cameras require optics in much the same focal length range, and Brandon notes that carrying redundant glass for both systems is getting to be a pain. There is also a Nikonos V and 15mm for backup, which he says is "not seeing much use these days." For strobes, Brandon uses Ikelite with multiple DS200s and DS125s, all connected to his housings by means of Ultralight arms.

David Fleetham

DAVID HAS GONE totally digital and uses Canon D60 bodies in UK-Germany housings. He has a full complement of lenses from superwide through the 100 Canon macro USM. However, he has his eye on the future and says, "I love my gear, but it's all for sale. It's tough to keep up in these digital times." I guess constant upgrading will be a part of our lives for a while, except maybe on the strobe front. David uses Ikelite DS125s with ball joint arms.

Stuart Westmorland

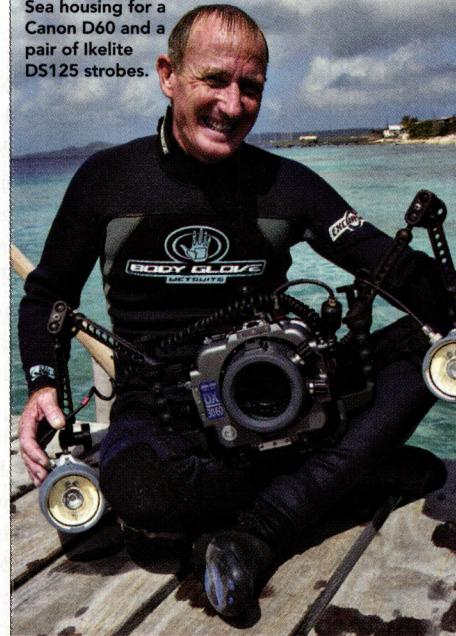
LIKE MANY PROS, Stuart is shooting

both film and digital. For digital, he uses a Jonah housing for Canon 10D with ports for 14mm, 15mm, 16-35mm, 50 macro and 100 macro lenses. Integral to his travel kit are multiple one-gigabyte microdrive cards, a Dell Inspiron laptop with 15-inch screen, 750 megs of RAM, a 60-gigabyte hard drive and 2.2 Pentium 4 processor. For his film work, he has a Canon EOS3 (same lenses) enclosed in a UK-Germany housing, occasionally used with a 1.4x and diopter on the front of 100 macro lens. He and wife Michele use 60-quart Igloo coolers with wheels to transport underwater gear, but pack as much as they can in carry-on bags. "My carry-on rolling bag is exactly what pilots and flight attendants use, but I have added the dividers from a Pelican case to the inside of my rolling bag. This fits an amazing amount of gear and gets the weight off your back—literally!"

Jim Watt

JIM IS A VOCAL supporter of digital photography, for no reason other than the contagious excitement digital imaging brought back into his career as a stock photographer. He is constantly on

Jim Watt on location in Bonaire with his Sea & Sea housing for a Canon D60 and a pair of Ikelite DS125 strobes.



the road reinventing his portfolio with a pair of Canon D60 housings in Sea & Sea housings and as many as six Ikelite DS125 strobes. Lenses include Canon 14mm, 15mm, 16-35mm zoom, 50 macro and 100 macro. Like most pro shooters, Jim also travels with a few lenses like the 70-200 zoom just for topside work, and a dedicated speedlight for strobe fill as necessary.

Tom Campbell

TOM CAMPBELL IS deeply immersed in high-definition television these days, and he finds the single-image frame grabs from this system to be amazingly high in quality. Yet, when called upon to shoot traditional stills, he uses the systems that have always worked for him in the past: three Nikon F4 cameras and two Subal housings with the appropriate domes. Lenses include a 16mm fisheye, an 18mm (his favorite for wide work), a 60mm and a 105mm for macro. Both Ikelite 200 and Sea & Sea 350 strobes handle lighting tasks, with TLC arms holding them in place. With two sets of cords for spares and a toolkit, he feels he can keep most anything working in the field.

THE BOTTOM LINE

What can we deduce from this informal, statistically insignificant survey of pro shooters?

- The traditional reliance on **Nikonos** cameras appears to be phasing out, except of course for the venerable **15mm**, still best for some types of photography such as large marine life or broad reef scenics.
- **Canon** and **Nikon** seem to be the preferred brands, with **Canon** in particular making significant inroads into what was once a one-horse race. **Fuji** digital cameras are popular as well.
- **Ikelite** dominates the strobe business; although **Sea & Sea**, and to a lesser extent, **Inon**, have significant market penetration.
- Everyone surveyed is either wholly converted to, or is experimenting with, digital. However, there are other pro shooters who still clearly prefer film. **Chris Newbert** and **Amos Nachoum** are two examples who come to mind.
- Digital has clearly changed the way pro shooters archive, transmit and publish pictures. Now it seems poised to forever change the way they capture them as well.

Depth

1



THE GREAT DIVES: WEDGE ROCK, BIMINI, BAHAMAS, P. 17

• Just southeast of the southern tip of South Cat Cay, Wedge Rock is reached via Bimini, 43 miles offshore from Miami Beach, Fla. Dive boats cover the distance in three to five hours, depending on weather. Fast boats do it in less. From May through October the water temperatures are in the 80s, reaching a seasonal high in August of around 87 degrees. November through April the water temperatures are in the low to mid-70s, reaching a seasonal low in early February of about 72 degrees. Dive Operators: Blackbeard's Cruises, www.blackbeard-cruises.com; Nekton Diving Cruises, www.nekton-cruises.com; Paradise Charters, www.paradisecharters.com; Sea Fever Diving Cruises, www.seafever.com; Scuba Bimini, www.scubabimini.com; Bill & Nowdla Keefe's Bimini Undersea, www.biminiundersea.com.

THE GREAT DIVES: PIXIE PINNACLE, CORAL SEA, AUSTRALIA, P. 18

• You'll need a boat to access Pixie



Pinnacle, located on Ribbon Reef 17. Gentle currents and moderate depth make this a simple dive, but the jam-packed pinnacle attracts all levels of divers. Coral Sea diving is excellent year-round, though January to March is considered the monsoon season. April to September is winter down under, which can offer great visibility. October to December is summer, with many coral reef species reproducing during this time. For a list of Great Barrier Reef dive charters and live-aboards, plus comprehensive travel guides and more, go to www.scubadiving.com and click on TripFinder.

THE GREAT DIVES: YO-257, OAHU, HAWAII, P. 20 • Water conditions are generally good, but because currents can be strong and penetration is possible, be sure you're properly trained before you attempt this dive. You'll need a boat to cover the distance between Waikiki Beach and the YO-257. Dive Charters: AAA Diving, www.aaadiving.com; Aarons Dive Shop, www.hawaii-scuba.com; AquaZone Scuba Diving & Water Sports, <http://aquazone.net>; Breeze Hawaii Diving Adventures, www.breezechawaii.com; Ocean Concepts Scuba, <http://oceanconcepts.com>.

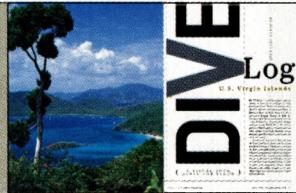
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TRAVEL GUIDE: THE CAYMAN ISLANDS, p. 34

DIVE CONDITIONS > The average water temperature is between 79 and 83 degrees, and the visibility is often greater than 100 feet. **WEATHER** > The Cayman Islands' tropical climate is cooled by trade winds in winter; the rain picks up in summer months, but it usually appears in brief spurts. Temperatures generally range from 75 to 85 degrees, with highs up to 90 in the summer. **GETTING THERE** > Scheduled flights to Grand Cayman's Owen Roberts International Airport are available on Cayman Airways, Air Canada, Air Jamaica, American Airlines, American Trans Air, British Airways, Continental Airlines, Delta Airlines, Northwest Airlines and US Airways. Cayman Brac also has its own airport, Gerrard Smith International. Little Cayman is served by daily inter-island flights. **GETTING AROUND** > Renting a car is a must if you want to explore Grand Cayman. Most of the big chains have offices at the airport. Cayman Brac has a handful of car rental options, such as B&S Motor Ventures (www.Bandsmv.com), CB Rent-A-Car (www.the-brac.com) and Brac Rent-A-Car (www.thebrac.com). A car is less of a necessity on Little Cayman, where, in most cases, a bike is all you'll need. To rent a car on any of the islands you'll need a \$7.50 temporary driver's permit. Also remember to drive on the left side. **DOCUMENTS** > U.S. visitors need a valid passport or proof of citizenship (e.g., birth certificate and photo ID). Keep the immigration slip issued to you—you'll need to return it upon your departure. There is a US\$25 departure tax, usually included in the price of your airline ticket. **LANGUAGE** > English. **TIME** > Eastern Standard Time, though there is no change for daylight saving time. **TELEPHONE** > The area code is 345. **CURRENCY** > The Cayman Islands dollar (CI) is on a fixed exchange rate: CI\$1 = US\$1.25. **ELECTRICITY** > 110 volts, 60 cycles, the same as in the U.S. **DIVE OPERATORS** > For detailed information on Cayman Islands dive operators, comprehensive travel guides, special dive deals and recent trip reports submitted by users, click on **TripFinder** at the top of our home page, www.scubadiving.com. **FOR MORE INFORMATION** > Contact www.caymanislands.ky or www.divecayman.ky.

3



Dive Log: U.S. Virgin Islands, p. 62

It's never a bad time to visit St. Thomas, St. Croix and St. John, though some divers try to avoid hurricane season, especially September and October. Those two months are also the cheapest time to visit, so it's up to you. The slightly higher-priced season runs Dec. 15 through April 15 and the "low" season April 16 through Dec. 14. **Dive Conditions** > Water temperatures range from the mid-80s in summer, dropping to the upper 70s in winter. Visibility ranges from 50 to 100 feet. **Average Air Temps** > Highs range from the low to high 80s year-round. **Money** > Dollars and credit cards are accepted; ATM machines are readily available. **Time** > Eastern Standard year-round; the U.S. Virgin Islands do not observe daylight saving time. **Dive Operators** > For detailed information on U.S. Virgin Islands dive operators, comprehensive travel guides, special dive deals and recent trip reports submitted by users, click on **TripFinder** at the top of our home page, www.scubadiving.com. **For More Info** > Call the USVI Tourism Board at (800) 372-USVI or visit the official web site, usvitourism.vi.

4



DIVE WATCHES, p. 68 • For more information on the dive watches reviewed:

BELL & ROSS, www.bellross.com

BREITLING, www.breitling.com

CITIZEN WATCH CO., www.citizenwatch.com

KOBOLD CHRONOGRAPH

& WATCH CO., www.koboldwatch.com

LUMINOX, www.luminox.com

TAG HEUER, www.tagheuer.com

TIMEX, www.timex.com

5

**DRIVE & DIVE: GULF OF MEXICO (TEXAS) OIL RIGS, P. 41 • Freeport:**

Live-aboards that visit the offshore rigs are located at **2nd Street** in Freeport, Texas. From **Houston**, take **288** south to **Freeport**. In Freeport, make a left at **2nd Street**. Just before the **2nd Street** red light, you'll see a football field on the right side. Continue about a mile on **2nd Street**. When you see the **On The River** restaurant on the right, you'll also see the signs for the dive boats on the left. Go over the levee to unload.

Boats: Ultra Dive, (281) 469-2846; www.ultradive.com; **Sea Searcher II**, (800) 396-3483, www.seasearcherii.com; **Gulf Diving**, (979) 233-4445, www.gulf-diving.com.

Freeport/Surfside: Boats that frequent the coastal rigs leave out of **Bridge Harbor Marina** in **Freeport**, near **Surfside**. From **Houston**, take **288** to **Clute**. Head east from Clute on **332** following signs to **Surfside Beach**. Just before reaching the **Intracoastal Waterway bridge**, exit to the right, cross under the bridge and follow the road to the entrance of **Bridge Harbor Yacht Club** (979-233-2101, www.bhycfreeport.com).

Galveston: Take **I-45** south to **Galveston** and continue straight on **Avenue J** to **Seawall Boulevard**. Bear to the left, then make an immediate left on **4th Street**. Continue straight to the entrance of the **Galveston Yacht Basin**. **Boat:** **Native Texan II**, (713) 419-1345, www.nativetexan2.com.

Port Aransas: Local dive shops book charters on the **Tropic Star**. From **Houston**, take **US59** south to **Victoria** and then pick up **US77** to **239**. Take **239** south to **35**, then follow **US35** until you see a sign to take **Business 35** into **Aransas Pass**. As you enter the town, you'll notice a sign for **Conn Brown Harbor**. Go left at the sign and when you see about 30 shrimp boats, you're there.

Port Aransas/Corpus Christi area dive shops: **Ascuba Venture**, (361) 985-1111,

6



Tropical Wetsuits, p.77

For more information on the tropical weight wetsuits reviewed:

ACTION PLUS
www.action-plus.com

HENDERSON USA
www.hendersonusa.com

AKONA
www.akona.com

OCEANER
www.oceaner.com

AQUA LUNG
www.aqualung.com

O'NEILL
www.oneill.com

BARE WETSUITS
www.bare-wetsuits.com

PINNACLE AQUATICS
www.pinnacleaquatics.com

DEEPSEE
www.deepseeinc.com

XS SCUBA
www.xscuba.com

www.ascubaventure.com; **Copelands**, (361) 854-1135, www.copelandsinc.com; **G&S Marine, Inc.**, (361) 758-7565, www.gsmarineinc.com; **Frogman's Dive Center**, (361) 749-3764, www.frogmans.com; **Poseidon Adventures**, (361) 749-3764, www.fish-dive.com.

Aransas Pass: From **Aransas Pass**, take **361** to the **Port Aransas** car ferry (free). After departing the ferry, make your first left and you'll see the **Port Aransas Boatman's Dock** on the first pier at the City Marina. **Boat:** **Poseidon Diver**, (361) 749-3764, www.fish-dive.com.

South Padre: Local dive shops book charters on the **Diver 1** and **Twin Fins** boats. For the **Diver 1** boat at **Sea Ranch Marina** in **South Padre**, cross the causeway from **Port Isabel** and take the first right on the island to the very large blue and white building one-third mile on the right. For the **Twin Fins** boat in **Port Mansfield**, take **186** east from **Raymondville** (off **US77**)

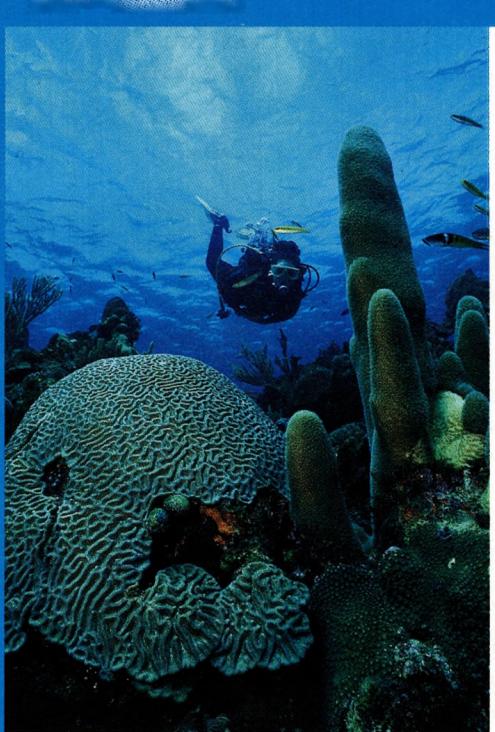
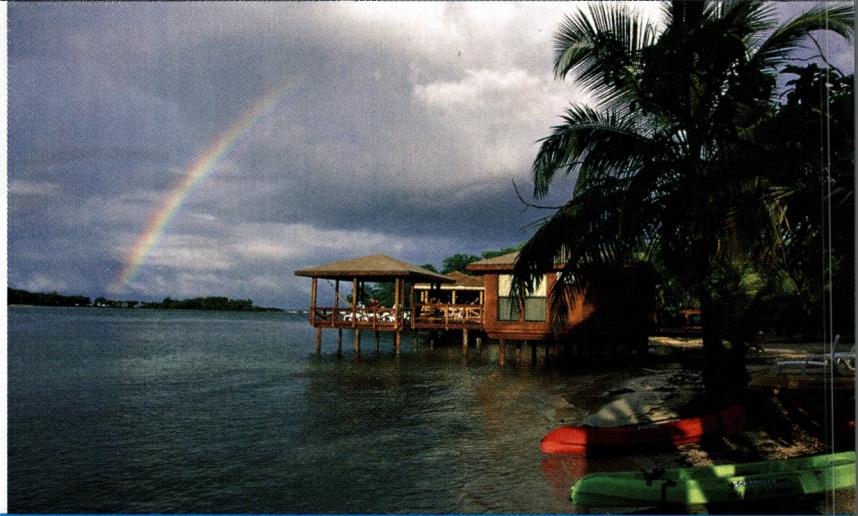
and continue **23 miles** to **Port Mansfield**. In **Port Mansfield**, turn right on **South Port Road**. **South Port Road** will wind to the left and turn into **East Port**, then winds to the right, then left. Take a left in the parking lot (slip F8). **Dive shops:** **American Divers**, (800) 761-2030 or (956) 761-2030, www.divesouthpadre.com; **Scuba Shack**, (956) 668-7282, www.thescubashack.com.

Sabine Pass: From **Houston**, take **I-10** east to **Winnie** where you pick up **73** east to **Port Arthur**. As you approach **Port Arthur**, look for the sign to take the **214 Spur** to **87**. Continue on **87** to **Sabine Pass** to the 4-way stop sign. Make a left and go straight ahead to the **County Boat Ramp**. To get to the **Sabine Pass Port Authority**, go right from the ramp and continue straight until the road deadends at the **Port Authority dock**. **Boats:** **Greg's Dive Shop**, (318) 487-4369 (**Evelyn G**); **Wild Dolphin Charters**, (409) 353-DIVE, www.texawilddolphin.com; **F&D Diving Charter**, (409) 722-8304.

> ANTHONY'S KEY RESORT

Divers Keep Coming Back to This Bay Islands Retreat

If you're looking for the ideal dive vacation, you may want to ask other divers about Anthony's Key Resort on Roatan. They'll tell you that there are many reasons they keep coming back.



THE RESORT

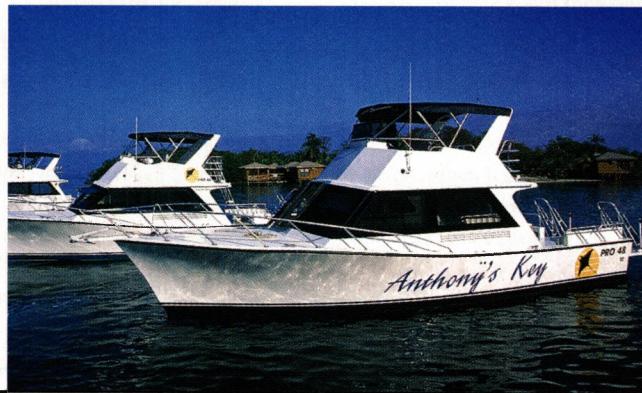
Nestled in the midst of a hillside jungle overlooking the Caribbean, the resort sprawls from the tropical hills down to a lagoon with two private palm-covered islets called Anthony's Key and Bailey's Key. Accessible by a one-minute taxi boat ride, Anthony's Key Resort offers wooden cabanas (with and without air-conditioning) on the edge of the lagoon by the dock and up on a hill. Nearby, there's a small sandy area with lounge chairs, beach volleyball, and water-sports, as well as Bailey's Key, which is where Roatan Institute for Marine Sciences (RIMS) conducts its well-known dolphin encounter programs.

This PADI Gold Palm IDC resort offers some great seven-night all-inclusive dive and snorkel packages. Check the News & Specials section of their web site for the best deals. Other highlights include being just a two-hour flight from Miami or Houston; a modern dive boat fleet, consisting of seven 42-foot custom dive boats and four 48-foot dive flagships for specialty excursions; great group deals including the "nine paid, one goes free" offering for travel August 28-

November 20 and November 27-December 18, 2004; lots of certification programs; nitrox; extended shore diving thanks to the new dive shack; and a wide variety of other activities including kayaking, canoeing, horse-back riding, and excursions.

THE DIVING

Roatan diving is world-class and Anthony's Key Resort makes it even better. The visibility typically ranges from 75 to 100 feet and average water temperature is around 78 to 80 degrees Fahrenheit. More than 35 distinct dive sites are within 10 to 20 minutes of the resort, including the 300-foot *Odyssey* wreck



resting on a sandy flat in 112 feet of water. Depending on their skill levels, divers may follow the top of the mast at 30 feet and descend to the top of the bow at 70 feet; then explore the bulwarks or cargo hole at 80 feet, the bow at 105 feet, and the stern at 112. The possibilities also include reefs, walls, ledges, caves, tunnels, holes, walls, wrecks, sand chutes, eel gardens, night diving, shore diving, and a variety of fish and coral. The weekly diving schedule typically calls for three boat dives each day and two night dives during your week stay. Along with nitrox, there's training from resort courses to IDC.

DISCOVERING DOLPHINS

The Institute for Marine Sciences at Anthony's Key Resort offers a unique opportunity for divers and snorkelers to interact with dolphins in their environment. The encounters are unique in that the dolphins are free to come and go as they wish. There is no feeding enticement to secure interaction with humans—the interaction is achieved by simply appealing to the natural curiosity of dolphins.

A number of programs are available, including a Dolphin Specialty Course, the Dolphin Dive, the Dolphin Snorkel, a regular Dolphin Presentation (free to guests), and a week-long Dolphin Discovery Scuba Camp for Children (summer months only). The very popular and successful camp includes SASY, Bubblemakers, Jr. Certification programs, lots of interaction opportunities, snorkeling, marine life slide shows, classroom sessions, and dolphin identification, anatomy, evolution, and physiology lectures.

The resort is constantly updating and improving amenities and services. Recently, this has included converting four Key bungalows to air-conditioned rooms and a new fully-equipped medical clinic on the premises.

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www.anthonyskey.com



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boats on the island. Offering full range of training and dive trip options. Individual gear lockers, rinse tanks and showers.

- Dive packages at extremely competitive rates! Divers can also include "All Meals and Unlimited Bar" in their package at bargain rates.
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LOOK



YELLOWSTRIPED GOATFISH in turbulent water, Kona Coast, Big Island, Hawaii.

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